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NARRATIVE

OF THE

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PROCEEDINGS

IN THE

NORTH PARISH OF HINGHAM,

FROM THE TIME OF THE REV. DR. WARE'S LEAVING IT,
TO THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. JOSEPH RICHARD-
SON OVER THE FIRST CHURCH AND CONGREGATION,
AND OF MR. HENRY COLMAN OVER THE THIRD
CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN THE NORTH PARISH.

BY AN INHABITANT.

Thomas Chapman

"And I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame."
Nahum iii. 5.

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TO THE READER.

MANY and contradictory reports have been circulated concerning the unhappy difficulties which have taken place in the north parish of Hingham, subsequent to the Rev. Dr. Ware's removal to the university at Cambridge. Mr. Richardson, who has obtained a settlement in that parish as his successor, in opposition to the wishes of a large portion of the society, has always pretended "an ability to confute the charges against him, and a desire to be brought before an impartial tribunal, *face to face* with his accusers, in order to convince his opposers in this parish that they have been "misinformed." Why he has never yet done this—whether owing to himself, his friends, or opposers—and how far there was reason to object to him as a gospel minister—are left to an impartial public to determine. The opposition to Mr. Richardson was not generated in political animosity; nor was the information respecting his character, which gave rise to that opposition, obtained through political channels. Accident, as will be seen, first led to suspicion, which facts, gradually unfolded, afterwards confirmed. It is not to be supposed that those who composed the opposition were so regardless of their own interest, as to suffer a mere difference in political sentiments to drive them from their fathers' house of worship, in which they held one half or more of the private pews (besides their share in the public property) which pews alone would have been considered equal to six thousand dollars, had the former harmony continued: we trust they have been governed by higher motives—by a conscious regard to duty and principle. The tie is at length broken, by which the parish was held together. The writer of this narrative, before he left the house, did personally, and also through the medium of some of Mr. Richardson's friends, solicit for an interview, in order to be convinced of the falsehood of the reports which affected Mr. Richardson's charac-

ter ; but it never could be obtained ; and at the ordination, he was forbid, by a constable who guarded the door of the council, to enter to hear what his vindication might be. But as many hard things have been said against the writer, and much injury to his interest attempted, for the undissembled part he has taken in the affair, that desire which every man ought to have for the approbation of the wise and good, has induced him to submit this, in justification of his conduct ; and he pledges himself for its being a correct statement of what has come to his knowledge. Conscious of having acted with a view to the good of the parish, and without prejudice against Mr. Richardson or his friends, he has no further apology to make than this : If, after having first heard those reports, to have industriously searched for the truth, is a fault —then he has done wrong ; and if, after believing them true, to object against such a character for his minister, is a fault —then he may be said to be in the wrong.

A NARRATIVE, &c.



A FULL narrative of our parish difficulties, with their rise and progress, will lead to the mention of the names of some persons, and of some private conversations, which would be gladly omitted. But as truth, and information to the public at large, as well as a just understanding of the subject by the people of the town, are the objects, it cannot be avoided.

On the Rev. Dr. Ware's being called to the professorship of divinity in the university of Cambridge, it of course became necessary to procure some other person to supply the pulpit. A parish meeting was therefore held on the 22d of April, 1805 (Col. Nathan Rice moderator) and the following gentlemen were chosen a committee for that purpose, with instructions to engage a preacher for not more than four sabbaths successively, viz. Hawkes Fearing, Benjamin Andrews, Caleb Thaxter, Levi Lincoln, jun. and Benjamin Cushing.

This committee engaged three candidates, who preached a month each. At the expiration of this time, it being understood by a part of the committee, and by some other persons, that said committee was to stand but three months—as no material objections had been made to either of the gentlemen who had preached with us—and as some persons thought hearing a large number might create a division, and that we should not do better than to hear one of these again, some of the committee wished for another meeting. Accordingly a parish meeting was called July 27th, 1805.

At this meeting (Col. Rice moderator) it was voted not to engage either of the three candidates who had preached, for the present. The same committee was continued, with liber-

ty to engage a candidate, after hearing him three sabbaths, for a longer time, if they should judge it proper ; or to engage another person to supply the pulpit.

At this meeting there was discovered something of that spirit which has since produced so much disturbance in the parish, and finally issued in its division. At its opening it was inquired by whom the meeting had been called, and a great degree of astonishment expressed, by Mr. Jacob Leavitt in particular, that a meeting should be called at so busy a time in the year, especially after it was so well understood at a former meeting, that a number of candidates were to be heard four weeks at a time until the fall, when we should be more at leisure. For his own part he hoped that resolution would be adhered to. It was further observed by some others, that to call back either of the gentlemen who had been already employed, unless we settled them, might hurt their feelings ; and as some people did not like either, it was best not to hear them again at present. Prudence forbade its being urged.

After the expiration of the term for which the last candidate had been engaged, Mr. Joseph Richardson, having been suggested by Mr. Hawkes Fearing, was engaged by Dr. Levi Lincoln, jun. How Mr. Fearing came to the knowledge of such a person is not exactly known ; but it has been hinted that it was by the recommendation of a Mr. Benjamin Gleason, a young man who kept a school in Charlestown, who was at Hingham in the winter of 1804-5, teaching masonic principles.

Mr. Richardson came into town, in other respects, a stranger to every one ; of consequence there was a general inquiry, who the preacher was, from whence he came, at what college he was educated, &c. On his name and place of residence (which was Charlestown) being mentioned, some person, who had an acquaintance with that town, being then in Hingham, inquired whether he was the Mr. Richardson who had been sued and cast for a breach of promise of marriage. It was ascertained from Dr. Dunn, who had resided some time in Charlestown, and who had connexions in Hingham, that this was the same Mr. Richardson ; that he had been so unfortunate as not only to have the imputation of this breach of promise against him, but also that of a breach of friendship and confidence with Dr. Morse, his patron, and instructor in divinity ; and also a quarrel with Commodore

Nicholson, which came to blows; and another with Daniel Parker, Esq. for which he had been horsewhipped; and it was said, that the circumstances of these matters might be known at that place.

These reports circulated, and were inquired into with all that assiduity which was natural to a people actuated by a serious concern respecting the character of the man who might become their minister.

In this state of affairs Mr. Richardson and his adherents were not indifferent or inactive, and in their zeal betrayed some evidences of what were their intentions. This naturally excited the attention of some steady and discerning persons towards the conduct of the candidate and his friends, and led them to make further inquiry into his past conduct. Mr. Richardson furnished his friends with the certificate of John Smith, pastor of the church at Dartmouth college, dated Hanover, N. H. August 30th, 1802; the approbation of Andover Association, dated Oct. 4, 1803; a letter of recommendation from Dr. Cummings to Dr. Morse, dated Billerica, Jan. 2d, 1804; and a certificate from David Goodwin, Thomas Harris and Matthew Bridge, trustees of Charlestown free schools, dated August 16th, 1805. His friends had these recommendatory papers read to particular individuals, and in collected companies, representing them as satisfactory evidences of the goodness of his character, and as a full confutation of the facts alledged against him; although the dates were all, except the last, antecedent to the publicity of those facts.

About this time Mr. Richardson brought with him to Hingham a man from Charlestown, by the name of Sweetser, and they together furnished the following reports for general circulation, in order to destroy all doubts respecting the amiableness of his character, and to wipe off all imputation of fault in him respecting the accounts we had heard. His friends strongly charged any person who mentioned those accounts with being inimical to Mr. Richardson from political views, thereby endeavouring to engage all republicans (as they called themselves) in his favour, by giving the dispute a political turn, though the opposers did not know, nor perhaps generally care, what his politics were.

Mr. Charles Lincoln, one of Mr. Richardson's adherents, told the following story, respecting the affair between Daniel Parker, Esq. and Mr. Richardson:—"Mr. Parker and Mr.

“ Richardson, walking out together at a particular time, pas-
 “ sed a well dressed woman, to whom Parker bowed, which
 “ occasioned Mr. Richardson to bow also. After they had
 “ gone on a little way, Parker inquired if he knew to whom
 “ he had been bowing ; and being answered in the negative.—
 [Here follows an observation respecting her character, which
 from its indecency we decline repeating.] “ To which Mr.
 “ Richardson replied, he did not know that ; but he had
 “ bowed, being in company with him, and supposing she
 “ might be a lady of virtue. A few days afterwards, when
 “ she met Parker, and inquired what little handsome devil
 “ he had with him at that time, he told her it was Mr.
 “ Richardson, a young clergyman, who boarded with him.
 “ After this, Parker would be frequently rallying him about
 “ it before company, and insinuating that he was acquainted
 “ with her. Parker, with Mr. Gleason, a young gentleman
 “ who kept a school in Charlestown, went to the house where
 “ this same young woman boarded, and introduced Gleason
 “ by the name of Richardson, a young clergyman. By this
 “ name Gleason continued his visits to said house undiscover-
 “ ed some time, till a woman belonging to the same house di-
 “ ed, for the appraisement of whose apparel a Mr. Nichols,
 “ either keeper of the hotel, or his brother, was called. At
 “ this place, when on this business, Mr. Nichols frequently
 “ heard Mr. Richardson mentioned as a person who visited
 “ that house, and with whom they seemed well acquainted.
 “ He took an opportunity, and mentioned it to Mr. Richard-
 “ son, who was struck with surprise, and wondered from
 “ what cause it could have arisen ; but upon inquiry found
 “ Mr. Parker and Mr. Gleason had been visiting, and making
 “ the aforesaid imposition. In an explanation on the subject
 “ betwixt Parker and Richardson, some warm words had en-
 “ sued, but that no blows ever took place, though Richardson
 “ would have done no more than justice if he had broken
 “ Parker’s neck.” This, Mr. Charles Lincoln conveyed in
 such a manner as if he had had it from Mr. Richardson him-
 self, and as if it was the whole truth. The same being re-
 lated to Mr. James Stevenson, (another of Mr. Richardson’s
 adherents) some short time after, he was asked whether it
 was true, and whether it came from Mr. Richardson. His
 reply was, “ Yes, I believe it did : although I did not hear it
 “ from Mr. Richardson myself, I believe Mr. Hawkes Fearing
 “ did, and that it is correct, except the last part, that there

“ were no blows ; for Parker did strike him with a little
“ stick.”

At the same time Mr. Stevenson said, in extenuation of Mr. Richardson's conduct as it respected Miss Robinson, the young woman who had prosecuted him for a breach of promise, “ that, although he had been cast at the inferiour court
“ at Concord, he was not guilty of a breach of promise ; and
“ that if he had brought forward his defence, Mr. Dana had
“ said he would have been acquitted :* that he had a letter
“ from her, consenting to their parting, which delicacy to-
“ ward her had kept back : that this letter would be brought
“ forward at the Supreme Court, when there was no doubt
“ he would be acquitted, as Mr. Richardson said there was
“ no evidence produced against him in the trial, either from
“ his letters or otherwise, until her brother came on the
“ stand, and swore to a strange something.”

It was also reported in town, that she had been indiscreet enough to keep company with other men, which Mr. Richardson had discovered by coming upon them himself.

As to Commodore Nicholson, they said he was a quarrelsome old man ; that he had come with his son into Mr. Richardson's school in school time, and treated him like a brute by falling upon him with violence, consequently there was no avoiding self defence.

Mr. Parker was generally represented by Mr. Richardson's friends, at this time, as a quarrelsome, debauched, unprincipled man.

In this way did they mitigate Mr. Richardson's conduct among his republican partisans.

Mr. Charles Lincoln reported, that Mr. Richardson said there was not any thing communicated by Dr. Morse, enjoining secrecy on him ; that the Doctor had spoken disrespect-

* Mr. Richardson not only told the same to others, but since his ordination he told the Rev. Mr. Norton, of Weymouth, “ that he never was
“ under any engagement, and that at the inferiour court he looked upon
“ himself so innocent as not to think it necessary to make any defence ;
“ but that he had appealed, and now intended to bring forward such
“ proof of innocence, that he had no doubt of being honourably acquitted ;” which story had such weight on Mr. Norton's mind, as to induce him to write a letter to Col. Rice, in which he states, “ that he is led to be-
“ lieve Mr. Richardson innocent, from such documents as explicitly and
“ solemnly declare he never made any promise of marriage to Miss Ro-
“ binson ; but on the contrary,” &c. Notwithstanding this belief, how-
ever, he has been cast at the Supreme Court since, at Cambridge, with additional damages.

fully of some persons in Mr. Richardson's presence, which had leaked out by some means, and got to them ; and because Mr. Richardson had told the truth, on being questioned about it, the Doctor had become inimical to him.

Such were the reports got into circulation. Whenever Mr. Richardson was in town, the little time he spent here was taken up in visiting a few friends, and in being carried by them to pray with the old and infirm, to give an appearance of great piety and attention. He was also uncommonly particular to notice the poor ; of which his friends took advantage, and gave it out as another reason which caused the opposition. By this means the minds of those people were prejudiced in his favour, and prepared to believe any thing which was told them, without any examination of its truth or probability.

In this time the opposers had heard more particulars of the charges against Mr. Richardson, especially that of Mr. Parker, and the cause of his whipping him.

His friends, zealous to secure him, lest so good a man should be taken up by another parish, spread a report, that the committee for supplying the pulpit would not engage him after the four first sabbaths should be out. Therefore a petition for a parish meeting came out, signed by twenty or more persons, and headed by Mr. Jacob Leavitt, who about a fortnight since wondered that a meeting had been called at so busy a time, and hoped a resolution would be taken for no more till fall. Accordingly a meeting was holden Aug. 2d, 1805.

At this meeting (Capt. Thomas Fearing moderator) the parish came together with all the zeal of warm partisans. It was proposed to engage Mr. Richardson for 16, 12, 8, and 4 sabbaths. The arguments made use of at a former meeting were now turned on Mr. Richardson's friends, by reminding them it would be best not to engage him longer at present, lest, if he should not be finally settled here, his feelings might be hurt, and it would abroad be imputed to a want of character, and he be injured ; but that, if we let him retire now, as the other gentlemen had done, we might at some future time invite him again. In the mean time his character might be better known ; as some people were doubtful whether he possessed all that discretion which was requisite in our situation ; and none appeared to be acquainted with his religious tenets (which were thought to be concealed) further

than could be gathered from the few sermons he had preached, some of which appeared to be very Calvinistic, and others very different. To this it was replied, that he had said of himself he was not Calvinistic. It was in this meeting proposed, by his friend Fearing, to bring forward the recommendations in his favour, which had been given him by the Rev. Mr. Smith and others, as before mentioned, and every thing which had been said against him abroad was with great warmth asserted to be false, and any person challenged to mention even one of them as fact. In tenderness to Mr. Richardson this subject was waved by his opposers; who observed, that out-door talk could not be prevented; but to introduce the discussion of such reports into a parish meeting would give them a publicity, which ought to be avoided; that Mr. Richardson's character ought to be viewed as sacred, and treated as good, at present; and that the parish should proceed in such manner as would best promote their common good.

This is the time to which Mr. Richardson must allude, when in his answer to the parish he says, the "purpose was understood"—no doubt by him and a few friends, that he should be palmed upon this parish. Accordingly a vote was obtained to hire him eight Sundays more, after his present time should expire. The beforenamed committee was dismissed, and the standing yearly committee were ordered to engage Mr. Richardson for the time voted, and also to see the pulpit supplied afterwards, till further ordered. The meeting was then dissolved.

Mr. Richardson was informed of the parish request for him to continue eight sabbaths longer, which he readily accepted, and all parties very generally attended meeting. Before this time had expired, the situation of the parish, and the reports in circulation, began to be known in the neighbouring towns, and Mr. Richardson met with difficulty to obtain an exchange with an ordained minister, so as to have the Christian ordinances administered. This was charged to his opposers. At last he procured the Rev. Mr. Harris once, which was considered by his friends as very much in his favour.

About two or three weeks we remained pretty quiet, though the subject was a general topic of conversation. Mr. Richardson, during this time, was careful to bring his man from

Charlestown with him almost every time he came, in order to give favourable reports concerning him. As they now boarded together in Charlestown, his friends were invited to come and see them, and hear for themselves how well he was liked and spoken of there. Those who accepted the invitation expressed great satisfaction at their reception and the attention shewn them, and reported what an amiable character every one, whom they had fallen in with, gave Mr. Richardson. He began now to be very cautious of seeing any of his opposers, never calling on them when in town, and seldom being to be found at his lodgings. It is true, he did not tarry long in town at any one time; but that time was devoted altogether to a chosen part, to carry on that intrigue which was now "well understood." In order to keep up the farce of religion, whenever an opportunity presented, he was carried to some place for prayer, with a crowd of followers to give an after sound of praise.

There was a caucus held by his friends, in which it was agreed to call another parish meeting at the expiration of his last sabbath; to choose a new parish committee, and in what manner to choose them, and also what mode of conduct to pursue during the time he must be absent, which would be four Sundays, and perhaps longer, to attend the court at Cambridge; and, as his friend Jacob Leavitt observed, he might be forced to jail, to satisfy judgment. This apprehension of his arose, perhaps, from having seen a copy of Mr. Richardson's letter to the lady he had abandoned, after the verdict which was given at the Court of Common Pleas, where he says, "If after all you should get your cause at the Supreme Court, which I will not warrant, I shall answer all your pretended obligations in thirty days," &c. [See document No. 48.]

A petition was presented for another parish meeting, to be held Oct. 14, 1805: at which, after choosing Capt. Thomas Fearing moderator, it was voted that there be a committee of seven to supply the pulpit, and that they be chosen by written votes, with all their names on each ticket.

Hawkes Fearing, Jacob Leavitt, Thomas Fearing, Seth Lincoln, Ezra Lincoln, Laban Hersey and John Marsh were chosen, as had been agreed on at the caucus. As all the votes had been prepared for the purpose, no person carried in any others. The committee were instructed to hire a preacher four sabbaths, with liberty at the expiration of this time to employ

the same person, or any other, for four sabbaths more, unless otherwise ordered by the parish. It was also voted that this committee be instructed to inquire into Mr. Richardson's character, and report to the parish what may be depended upon with regard to his former conduct.

At this meeting a great deal of desultory conversation took place. As it was well known by the opposers of Mr. Richardson, that his friends intended to hire him again as soon as he should be free from court, it was observed, since every one's mind was made up as to his like or dislike of him as a preacher, his character ought to be ascertained in the first place. To which his friends replied, His character is good; we do not want any person who has not a good one; if he cannot get a recommendation from the ministers of his association and neighbourhood, we will give him up. Such were the impressions made on the minds of many good men, by Mr. Richardson's own declaration of the falsehood of the reports against him, and of his readiness for an examination. But a number of the opposers now very well knew, that some of the stories, which his friends circulated in his favour, were incorrect, if not false. It was again asserted in this meeting, with much warmth, that every thing alledged against Mr. Richardson was false; and any one who dared assert the contrary was challenged to come forward. Upon which one of the opposers said he would pledge himself to support the four following facts. First, that Mr. Richardson had been sued for a breach of promise of marriage, and cast in the Court of Common Pleas at Concord for five hundred dollars. Secondly, that he had made a communication of a private conversation between himself and Dr. Morse. Thirdly, that he had had a quarrel with Commodore Nicholson, which came to blows. Fourthly, that he and Daniel Parker Esq. had had a fracas, in which Parker horse-whipped him. How far Mr. Richardson had been blamable, he did not take upon himself to say; but he thought an inquiry ought to be made. For his own part, he felt dissatisfied. He further observed, that some gentlemen, while vindicating Mr. Richardson's character, seemed regardless of other people's. Here he mentioned the story told by Mr. Charles Lincoln, and confirmed by Mr. James Stevenson, in vindication of Mr. Richardson in his fracas with Mr. Parker. He further observed, if what he had heard from respectable characters in Charlestown was correct, Mr. Richardson, or his friends in this place for him, had giv-

on a wrong statement, and that Mr. Richardson was blameable. He then related, that he had been told the fracas between Messrs. Parker and Richardson was in consequence of a conversation at table, about an act of a play, in which was exhibited a certain hypocritical character, which Parker applied to Richardson. He mentioned the injustice of sacrificing Messrs. Parker and Gleason's characters, in support of Richardson, and referred to a number of young gentlemen, who were better acquainted with their brother Gleason than he was, for the probability of the two stories: whether they thought Mr. Gleason such a villain as to borrow Mr. Richardson's name to visit a house he was ashamed to visit under his own name; or whether they thought him fool enough to take a witness if he did go, seeing that his future fortune was likely to depend upon the character he should maintain. After putting their heads together they answered, it was not brother Gleason. He then asked what Gleason it was. To which they replied, they did not know. This story had circulated six weeks or more, every body supposing it to be the same Benjamin Gleason who taught masonry here in 1804, nor could any other be conjured up afterward. But it had been done for the benefit of Mr. Richardson by his friends, and probably the first materials of it were furnished to them by his means.

After this relation some other people of the parish thought an inquiry had better be made, and various methods were proposed, by some of his friends, who had not been in the secret caucus. One, that Mr. Richardson bring recommendations from the ministers, or deacons. But it was remarked, that the places proper to inquire at were where he had been; that if taverns, hotels or brothels were the places of his imprudences, they were the fittest places to learn his character, which ministers and deacons probably knew nothing about. Another, that two persons, one of his friends, and one of his opposers, should go with Mr. Richardson to the persons knowing the facts, and inquire, and bring back the result in writing: then there could be no further dispute about what was truth, as there had been different relations made by the parties on every subject. After various proposals of this kind, Mr. Jacob Leavitt, one of the cabinet, proposed, with a little modesty, that the parish committee (*he being one*) should make this inquiry. To this some of the opposition replied, that they imagined it would give but little

satisfaction to the discontented for such men to inquire, and that the proposal for one on each side would be much better. As this was not the result in the caucus, it was overruled; and after insulting the opposition by proposing to add two of their number to the committee, which they said was more than they deserved, it was concluded that the first chosen should be the men.

The dissatisfied, being in this situation, informed the parish that they should inquire for themselves; and procured a number of written documents from gentlemen of respectability concerning his conduct at Charlestown. From certain reports which had been spread by his friends respecting Miss Robinson, and his having shown an extract of a letter from her to him, in which, it was said, "she gave her consent to dissolve the connexion," a particular inquiry was made into her character, and measures taken to know the truth of these reports, the result of which convinced the opposers that their objections to the man were not without foundation. [See documents Nos. 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39.]

From the story of Mr. Charles Lincoln, brother Benjamin Gleason's character stood so implicated it was necessary something should be done to set it right. The next time Mr. Richardson came to Hingham, and I think the last of his eight Sundays, previous to his leaving town on Monday he was applied to by Mr. Jotham Lincoln, jun. to know who the beforenamed Mr. Gleason was. Mr. Richardson was very much surprised to think so much consequence had been attached to the matter, and told a story of this nature: Parker and himself, walking out together at a certain time, passed a well dressed woman, to whom Parker bowed, and he also; after which he, Parker, would be frequently rallying him for it in company. As it respected Parker and Gleason, that on a time they passed the house where the woman lived, and Parker stopped at the door or window, to speak to her. Mr. Gleason turning himself about a little to wait, she inquired who that little handsome man was. Parker answered, a young clergyman; but called no names. Respecting the circumstance of the farce, he was silent at this time, excusing himself, as being in a hurry.

This last Sunday, December 1805, he gave some evidence of his abilities to heal the divisions and effect a reconciliation between the parties, by exhibiting the pride of the rich and aristocratic part of the community, who, he said, after they

had supplied themselves with all the blessings they wanted, if any remained, would suffer the poor then to come in ; and expressing his fears lest after him wolves might come in and devour us. And with these suggestions he quitted for the present.

The desk being now at the disposal of the committee and Mr. Richardson, the committee procured a gentleman to preach four Sundays, who had a general attendance in the house, and easily obtained an exchange for the communion.

Both parties at this time were engaged in making their inquiries, and warm disputes arose in the parish about each other's conduct. The opposers were charged with ruining Mr. Richardson's character ; and his friends said they were bound as Christians to assist in setting it right in the eyes of the world. Mr. Richardson said, he was holden here by duty to himself in vindication of his character. To this it was replied, that his character was not made in this town, but that he brought it with him ; that every man's character would follow him whenever he offered himself for public office ; that he came here a stranger ; that we reported nothing but what was known where he was known, and what had been related to us ; that we did not yet presume to mention any thing which we might have in our minds against him for his conduct here, consequently in this he could not have suffered by coming among us.

It was mentioned to his friends by some individuals, that their minds were open to conviction, and if Mr. Richardson would call on them, and make it appear that these reports were calumnies, they would assist in evidence against the persons who had raised them, and even go so far as to give pecuniary aid to procure satisfaction ; but if true, they could not be willing such a man should be set over them in the Gospel ; but at present they were led to believe most of them were true.

It was also stated, that a regular ecclesiastical council of neighbouring churches never could be obtained to ordain him ; that with such an opposition, and with a man whose character required so much patching, we had better quit him, and try some other person ; otherwise the parish, which had many years been united, would be broken up. But it was insisted upon that his character was good, and must be tried in justification to Mr. Richardson. At this time it was currently reported by his friends, that there were only eight or ten unprincipled old tories against him.

The parish being in this ferment, many stories circulated; among others, that Mr. Richardson had been excommunicated from Dr. Morse's church; which arose from some persons not distinguishing between excommunication and suspension, or whether it was voluntary or otherwise. This gave great offence, and was called another lie, raised by his opposers. In order to confirm it, Mr. Richardson applied to Dr. Morse for a certificate that he had not been excommunicated. The Doctor gave him one, that he had been neither excommunicated nor suspended; because he never belonged to his church. With this he furnished his friends, who used it among the people without, and probably would have brought it forward at their next parish meeting; but discovering that the opposers had the whole truth (as may be seen from Document No. 7) it was kept back.

The opposers having procured written statements of several facts, it was agreed to have several copies taken of the documents Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, in order to be shewn to any person in the parish, who was disposed to read them. To prevent any incorrectness, no others were allowed to transcribe them, nor those to go out of the hands of certain persons; but to be read by any in their presence. This in a few days brought from the committee for inquiring into Mr. Richardson's character, a recommendation of him from the selectmen of Charlestown. [Document No. 15.] It may be noted here, that this committee may truly be called the secret committee; for all their business was prepared in conclave, and nothing of it known to the opposers, except by accident from some of the subordinate attendants on the caucus, who were admitted in order to take directions how to vote. Copies of this recommendation were given to all the friends who wished for them. At the same time care was taken to fault the opposers for not doing the same by theirs, and falsehood and forgery were assigned to be the reasons why they durst not. It was said they never would dare come forth openly with them.

These gentlemen selectmen of Charlestown were applied to for further information on the subject, as may be seen by Document No. 21. But their wisdom prevented an answer.

Another tale was, that Deacon Goodwin had said, although as one of the trustees he had recommended him, he should not choose him for his own gospel minister. This was carried back to him, which occasioned him to write again, that

he had not altered his former opinion; which may be seen by Document No. 16, and also how far he would now approve of him for his own minister.

As it was understood by the committee, and Mr. Richardson, that he was to have a call, the gentleman who had preached the last month was dismissed, lest he should make a division among the friends, because many appeared to like him; and a man by the name of Huse was sent by Mr. Richardson to supply the desk (till he should be prepared to come himself) and to answer in some measure the purposes of the man from Charlestown, whose usefulness had been in some measure lost since the detection of the falsehood concerning Gleason and Parker.*

After Mr. Huse had preached a while, Mr. Richardson came himself to preach the thanksgiving discourse. The day after, formal notice was given for the opposers to meet him in the presence of his friends, and inform him what charges they had against him. Some of the opposers thought it best not to notice this call, as it would be of no use, and probably many false reports might arise from it; therefore they refused. Col. Rice, Mr. Thomas Loring and others, being of a different opinion, they met him and his friends, and read to him documents Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6; of which he requested copies. He was answered, as he knew the facts, and the gentlemen who furnished them, he, or his friends, might procure them whenever they pleased; as the gentlemen who furnished us, would give them the same. He was now questioned, whether the contents were true; to which he answered in the negative. He was then asked, whether he meant that the statements were false, or that the whole truth was not told. To this question he replied, that the colouring gave them a very different appearance from what they would have, told otherwise. This occasioned what was at first conjectured would be the issue: his friends came out with a report, that Mr. Richardson denied the charges, and wished for copies of the documents, which were unreasonably refused him. Whereas his opposers conceived that he acknowledged the facts, but said the colouring conveyed too much. The assurance with which Mr. Richardson heard these documents led some of his friends to confess, that though they believed them true, they would still support him.

* This story was traced so far as to discover that it must have rested upon him or Mr. Richardson.

The minds of the parish having been prepared, a parish meeting was holden December 9th, 1805. At this meeting (Jacob Leavitt moderator) it was voted "that no papers for or against Mr. Richardson's character be read in this meeting, but such as may be deposited with the clerk to be recorded, and the originals be returned to a committee which the parish shall appoint to receive them, after they are recorded."

The following documents were read. A certificate of John Smith, No. 9; approbation of Andover Association, No. 10; a letter of Dr. Cummings, No. 11; a certificate of David Goodwin and others, No. 12; one of Nathaniel Hawkins and others, No. 15; one of Pierson Nichols, No. 14; one of A. Adams, No. 18; statement of S. Dana;* a recommendation of Nathaniel Huse, No. 17. It was also voted, "that the documents which may be produced, unfavourable to the character of Mr. Richardson, and his letter of defence, may be read without being given up or recorded." The same were accordingly read. After which, the meeting was adjourned till 8 o'clock next morning, at which time the parish met again. It was "voted to accept the report of the committee to investigate the character of Mr. Richardson," which is as follows:—"Your committee, appointed to investigate the character of Mr. Richardson, ask leave to report, that they have attended that service; and from the best information we can obtain, we believe him a gentleman of good moral character, as the accompanying documents will abundantly testify. We now request any gentlemen to come forward with any thing to the contrary.

THOMAS FEARING, *Chairman.*

December 9, 1805."

The parish then "voted Mr. Richardson to settle in this parish in the gospel ministry; there being 111 votes in favour, and 41 against him. The committee, appointed to investigate his character, were ordered to inform him of the result of the meeting, and request his answer to the same. If he accepted the offer from the parish, the committee were instructed to make a contract that should be equally binding on one side as the other. The same com-

* This statement is not inserted among the documents, as it does not respect the merits of the cause, but relates to a conversation between Dana and a Mr. Caldwell, in which they disagree about what is the truth.

“mittee were appointed to receive the documents, lodged
 “with the clerk for record, and return them to the owners.”
 They were also continued for supplying the pulpit until further order from the parish.

At this meeting a vote passed, “that the persons present,
 “who were twenty-one years of age, and upwards,
 “and not qualified by law to vote, might express their
 “minds by a poll on the question of giving him a call. The
 “result of which was, that there were sixty voters of this
 “description in favour of the question, and none against it.”
 A protest against the proceedings, signed by fifty persons, was
 then read, and given up for record. [Document No. 22.]
 The meeting was then dissolved.

In order to give every influence to obtain the vote, it had
 been for some days urged to the benevolent, that the great
 injury we had done Mr. Richardson’s character ought to induce
 people to vote in his favour for settlement; that his refusal,
 which was probable, might be an advantage to him abroad.
 Mr. Huse, who was very busy here, gave this also as his
 opinion, and corroborated this sentiment, by BETTING that
 Mr. Richardson’s answer would be in the negative; and, in
 order to enhance his great worth, and future prospects for
 the ministry, said that he had refused an invitation from
 Fitchburg, with an handsome offer.

Many were thus influenced in favour of the vote, who wished
 and expected him to refuse the invitation, but meant to assist
 in giving him an easy and honourable retreat from the
 parish.

It may be thought, from the manner in which the committee
 called upon “any gentlemen to come forward with
 “any thing to the contrary,” that they wished for an impartial
 investigation of his character; but the manner of conducting
 the meeting will shew their sincerity, especially to those
 who know that this committee, and a few others, had consulted
 together, and determined the mode of conducting it, and
 had the entire controul to themselves.

This meeting was opened and conducted with confusion.
 Every person who could be prevailed upon by the friends of
 Mr. Richardson, was invited to attend the meeting, placed
 among the legal voters, and told he had as good a right to
 vote as any other person. The records of the meeting will
 shew this. The meeting, oppressed the first afternoon with
 sixty or more illegal voters mixed with the legal ones, and

voting as they and the moderator saw fit, and by a number of lads in the gallery, who disturbed by their noise, and occasionally hissed the speakers on the opposition, led the opposers to read a list of illegal voters who were alphabetically arranged, and to object to their voting on the main question. This served the purpose of making several act in his favour, among those who were called the *constitutional* voters, by the opposition being held up to them as an aristocratic usurpation to deprive them of a just and constitutional right. A man of colour happened, from the alphabetical arrangement, to be placed within a few of the head in the list : this was immediately hissed, and called another reflection on the whole number, which affronted many more, and is supposed to be the occasion of giving an unanimous vote of all present of this description of voters in favour of the call. The committee to inform Mr. Richardson of his call, gave in the vote as 171 to 41, which was also handed by some persons to the Chronicle office, whereas the vote stood 111 legal voters to 41.

At an early hour in this meeting, it was proposed by one of the leading friends to Mr. Richardson, that no papers be read except the originals should be given up to be disposed of as the parish pleased. As it was well known that this was a manœuvre to get those which belonged to the opposition into their own hands (perhaps to destroy them) they were told it was needless to take the vote, for the opposition commanded their own papers, and would choose the time when to give them out of their hands. If the parish did not wish to hear them on those conditions, they might refuse. If they could not get into their possession the original papers, the committee and the most active partisans did not so much wish to have them read in meeting, as they had seen and knew the substance of their contents ; and besides had nothing which went to disprove one of the statements, except Mr. Richardson's own denial.

This they possessed from an answer of his to the documents, which had been read to him the day after thanksgiving ; which they wished to be read in the meeting, but intended to keep from the examination of the opposers. In this stage of the meeting, as the opposers wished for a copy of this answer, they offered to give up their papers for record, if his answer was ; but the parish saw fit to pass by their former vote, and now voted, that this answer, with the documents in possession of the opposers, should be read, without

either being given up, or recorded. Documents Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and this answer or defence, were accordingly read.

After the parish had heard the report of their committee, and the several documents in support of the same, before they had passed the vote of acceptance, the committee were questioned by some of the opposition, whether they had nothing else to offer either in writing or verbally; to which a negative answer was given. It was then requested that Mr. Hawkes Fearing should be questioned, whether he had nothing; to which he replied in the negative. He was again asked if he had never received a letter from Westford on the subject. To this he finally replied—Ah! O yes—I had a letter, but I did not consider it any thing. It contained some compliments to me, but nothing worth notice; I have left it at home. To this it was replied, that he might let the parish judge for themselves. That if he would not bring it forward, as it appeared the rest of the committee did not know the contents, a copy of it would be produced, and if not allowed to be read in meeting, such use would be made of it without as should be thought fit. On this he sent home, and got the letter (Document No. 18) which was read, and very soon after the report was accepted.

This may be a fit time to give the reasons why the opposers withheld a copy of their documents from Mr. Richardson and friends, which was thought unreasonable and unjust by many; while they were reproached with falsehood and forgery for keeping them back, and suffered all the disadvantage consequent therefrom. Several reasons operated; among others these are some:—Mr. Richardson had been officious in hurrying the matter on before a due inquiry had been made, and in his representations of himself had been very incorrect. The opposers suspected that he intended, instead of producing evidence which would invalidate the facts therein stated, to continue his endeavours to explain away their force, and that if they kept them back, they should thus discover the disposition of the man, and better shew it to others. They yet hoped the committee would go to Dr. Morse and the other gentlemen, and get themselves the same statements which they had been informed of, and bring forward to the parish the result of a free and impartial inquiry, as it would have been better received from them, and convinced the parish that Mr. Richardson wanted the necessary prudence for

the ministry ; which at this time had never been touched upon by the opposers, further than they were constrained by his friends insisting upon it, that that should be the only objection. These statements they supposed would have been sufficient, without bringing forward some letters the opposers possessed respecting his courtship of Miss Robinson, which were known to but few, and never intended for publicity if he should go away—unwilling to injure him by an exposure. Why the committee for inquiring his true character neglected doing it, is best answered by themselves. We also thought we could come forward at last before a regular ecclesiastical council (if they had one) which he and they pretended they were willing for, and that if he could not be settled in that manner he would not in any other. In such a council we expected a quiet and impartial hearing.

It will perhaps never be enough lamented, that this committee neglected the good of the parish, which was so much in their power, and indeed Mr. Richardson's future happiness, if he be not more actuated by a little pecuniary advantage, than by piety, and the promotion of religion and happiness among the people of this place. Five of these gentlemen at this time commanded confidence from the parish at large, with very few, if any, minds mistrustful of their integrity. Therefore if they had inquired into the whole of Mr. Richardson's character, and brought it forward, instead of searching only for the fair side of it, and shutting their ears against every person who said any thing unfavourable or doubtful about him, without knowing their reasons, they would have performed their duty and done much good. But instead of this, they would not hear nor bring forward any thing except on one side, saying, it was their duty to collect only what was favourable ; and left it to the experience of the parish after he should be settled to determine his true character. Perhaps well meaning themselves, some of them did not use enough of that prudent jealousy towards others to prevent being enthralled in the designs of artful intrigue, and thereby became instruments to deceive others. One of them was heard to say, he wondered any person could think ill of Mr. Richardson. For himself, the more he inquired, the more bright his character appeared. Very true, because pains were taken to direct his inquiries to men who had a partial interest to answer, and many of them were pointed out by Mr. Richardson himself.

If all the documents, together with his general character, had been brought before the parish by the committee, then they would have been examined by the people dispassionately, and judged deliberately, which would have determined them to avoid at best a doubtful character, and cautioned them not suddenly to lay hands on a stranger. But as all on the dark part of his character was brought by the opposers, they were read with prejudice and confusion, which gave the designing an advantage to represent them as the effect of malice, federalism, and his attention to the poor, and thus to exert all the power of politics and popular disgust to hoodwink the judgment. From this, and only from this mode of inquiry, can the report of the committee, and its result, be accounted for ; as it is believed that no person can travel thirty miles through the county of Middlesex, or wherever he is best known, without hearing two out of three, who shall be acquainted with him, on being asked his character, answer, We know no good, or you will find him out within a year or two ; or give some insinuation that will lead the mind to suggest something rotten at bottom.

The first four sabbaths which Mr. Huse preached here, twenty or more families left the meeting, being determined not to hear Mr. Richardson or his representative, till his character was cleared up. When Mr. Huse's time had expired, Mr. Richardson not being prepared to come himself, the committee themselves engaged Mr. Huse longer, as they said no other person could be procured to come in the present situation of the parish. Part of the opposers returned to hear him ; but a part would not until the difficulties should be finally settled. Mr. Huse, after a time, making himself more of a partisan than became a stranger, occasioned a part of those who had returned to hear him, to leave him again.

The parish being in this state, and many friends growing uneasy, as they disliked Mr. Huse for a preacher, aroused the committee and the active part of the friends to think of some expedient. Accordingly, after considerable passing and re-passing from Charlestown, and communication by letters, Mr. Richardson sent a letter to Cpl. Rice (Document No. 19) and received in answer No. 20. Mr. Richardson's answer to the parish also was sent about this time, which, from its nature, and in order to make some observations on it, and to shew how exactly he adhered to its professions, though done after prayerful deliberation, shall here be inserted.

To the Inhabitants of the North Parish in Hingham.

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

Whereas it has pleased the Great Head of the Church and Glorious Author of Religion, in his wise and unerring providence, to leave this parish destitute of a gospel minister, and to put it into the hearts of so great a proportion of this people to invite me to settle with them in that sacred office and relation: and whereas this invitation has been duly and respectfully presented to me by the committee appointed for the purpose: I most cheerfully, in firm presence of mind, present you this address in reply. That you, my brethren and friends, have honoured me with this result after the most thorough and scrupulous attention to my character and qualifications, is a consideration that affords me the fullest confidence in your friendship and fidelity. Would to God that all concerned in this event were of one heart, and of one mind, for this to me would be an unspeakable joy. The various events which have taken place relative to this subject, have made deep, very deep impressions on my mind. These impressions lead me to acknowledge the distinguishing hand of Providence in thus overruling events. On my first engagement to preach to this people, no idea was entertained by me of being considered a candidate for settlement. When the second application was made, *the purpose was understood*; but such things had already transpired relative to my character, as forbid me to decline, since my name must then have suffered without possibility of a vindication. Even now no alternative remains for me in duty, whatever has been my inclination, but to evince to the minds of those who are dissatisfied respecting my moral character, that they have the misfortune to be misinformed. But I have not a wish that their opinion should rest solely on my own word. I have ever been cheerfully willing to submit my character to the most thorough investigation. I now most solicitously anticipate the pleasure of appearing, *face to face*, with my accusers, before an impartial council.

Looking forward to that event inspires my heart with a hope, that all misunderstandings and differences will be adjusted, that harmony may then be restored, and peace be multiplied to the people of this parish.

With such sentiments and views, I have solemnly and prayerfully deliberated on the subject before you, and thus trust I am duly prepared to reply to your invitation.

I now cheerfully and cordially accept your invitation to settle as your gospel minister, with a readiness of mind fully to comply with all the conditions of the same.

This I do in a reliance on the aid and support of divine grace, and under a humiliating sense of liability to the failings and imperfections incident to human nature.

Brethren and Friends, In this interesting and solemn undertaking I shall need your kind aid, and I humbly ask your united prayers, that, should the Holy Author of Religion see fit to consecrate me to his service among you, as a minister of Jesus Christ, he would be pleased to endow his unworthy servant with all the gifts and graces requisite to adorn his holy profession; that all this people may be of the same mind one toward another, united in the bonds of charity, and supported by the blessed consolations of the gospel, until ye are "built up in the most holy faith;" and so "keeping yourselves in the love of God," "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

My Christian Brethren and Friends, Be assured that I remain, with sentiments of high respect and unfeigned love,

Your humble servant,

Charlestown Jan. 6, 1806.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

Copies of this answer were taken, and distributed among the friends some time before it was communicated to the parish, and word was given out that he would not preach any more until regularly ordained. In this answer the reader perceives expressions of great piety, an ardent desire to satisfy the opposers by meeting his accusers *face to face* before an impartial council, a love of order, and a wish to restore harmony to the parish.

Can it be supposed, after reading this answer, that any but the jaundiced mind of opposition would construe it into studied hypocrisy, and a snare to catch the credulous, and enslave the consciences of the opposition to receive him as their gospel minister? But what will be said when it is known, that at this very time he was busily engaged, with some of his friends, in inquiring how he might be imposed on the parish without a call from the church of Christ in this place; knowing the church had met, and protested against the irregular proceedings of the congregation? [See Document No. 23.] that after being informed by ministers it would be ecclesiastically irregular, they then consulted law characters to know

how it could be effected constitutionally? and that at the same time they were planning a mode of inquiry into his moral character? He also expresses his satisfaction, "that after the most thorough and scrupulous attention to his character and qualifications, they had formed this result;" when he knew that nothing in all the evidence in support of his character had gone directly in answer to the facts alledged against him (which may be seen in the documents) except what he himself had said in the beforenamed letter of defence, which contained so much inconsistency and prevarication, that it was kept from the critical examination of the opposers, and only used to confirm his friends, as was afterwards said, and then returned to him again; lest it might in future be called for, in testimony against the truth of it. Therefore it can only be given generally, as taken from memory after a careful reading of it. [Document No. 49.]

Mr. Huse continued to preach until the parish generally became so uneasy that nothing further was done, that at length Mr. Richardson came to Hingham to fix on the expected investigation, and the best mode to conduct it, in order to deceive the people at large, and to prevent the opposition from coming forward, and thus turn it to their disadvantage.

A number of friends therefore met him, and agreed upon a plan, which was left to them to carry into effect, at a parish meeting to be called for the purpose; and he returned to Charlestown. In the interim, particular agents were tampering with the opposition separately, in order to divide them respecting the number of the council, and the method of choosing them, and to deceive them with regard to the general plan which was to be pursued at the meeting. A large number of subscribers were procured to the petition of this meeting, that they might become interested to support it.

Feb. 10, 1806, a parish meeting was holden to see if it was the mind of the parish to unite with Mr. Joseph Richardson in calling an ecclesiastical council to investigate his moral character. Mr. Jacob Leavitt was chosen moderator, and the following votes passed:

1st. "That it is the mind of the parish to unite with Mr. Joseph Richardson in calling an ecclesiastical council to investigate his moral character.

2d. "That the council consist of five, and that the parish choose three of the council, and Mr. Richardson two of them, to investigate his moral character.

“ On a motion made to see if the parish would reconsider
 “ their former vote, and allow those who are in the opposi-
 “ tion to Mr. Richardson to choose half the council, it passed
 “ in the negative.

“ Voted, That the parish choose their three of the council
 “ by written votes, and the names of the three whom they
 “ choose be inserted in each ticket.

“ The moderator declared there were for Dr. Cummings,
 “ for the Rev. Mr. Bentley, and for the Rev. Mr. Foster, of
 “ Littleton, each of them ninety-four votes, and not any for
 “ any other person.

“ Voted, That the present committee for supplying the desk
 “ be a committee to request the attendance of said council, at
 “ such time and place as they shall think proper, and to
 “ provide accommodations for the same, and give seasonable
 “ notice thereof to all parties concerned. Also, in case
 “ of failure of any of said council, that said committee be em-
 “ powered to appoint a substitute, or be authorised to request
 “ the procedure of the council, though the whole number be
 “ not assembled.

“ Voted, That said committee call on the parish committee
 “ for orders on the treasury for money to defray the cost of
 “ the investigating council.”

The meeting was then dissolved.

It was inquired in this meeting whether the parish would also provide for the expenses of the opposition to procure their evidences, as it had been expressed by some of the friends that they would be required in person : but no answer was obtained.

Soon after the meeting was opened, it was proposed to the parish, that they should allow the opposition to choose one half of this council ; there being, as the opposition thought, only two sides to the question, Mr. Richardson and his friends making one, and his opposers the other. The committee, and several of the friends, either pretended, or did think, there were *three*. Two or three of them spoke otherwise ; but it was overruled, and they chose the whole without a negative, agreeable to the list prepared by them and Mr. Richardson when he was at Hingham.

We here observed that our request had been just and reasonable. If they would not grant it we must put up with it. They must also know they had no power to compel us to appear, and that we should not. If they met the council by

themselves, and the council consisted of good and wise men, they would not enter into the subject ; therefore it would be of no use. This availed nothing ; because a different procedure would have been contrary to the previous agreement between the committee and Mr. Richardson.

The three men chosen by the parish, were unknown to us generally. Parson Bentley's name we had seen in the papers as a politician, but not as a divine. Whom Mr. Richardson would choose, we could obtain no information at present ; whether they were to come from this state or Rhode-Island. After some days it was reported he would choose Dr. Osgood, and a Mr. Stone. In this state of ignorance were we left respecting the council—whether Doctors Cummings and Osgood would be able to attend, by reason of the inclement season, or who would be substituted for them ; they being the only persons known by us. We were also much surprised when told that this council, so called, would be only a *reference* of ministers, or whatever else the committee should substitute, and would meet at Boston or Charlestown.

The Monday evening preceding, one week before the council met, Dea. William Cushing, as clerk of the church, and Mr. Thomas Loring, as one of the opposition in the congregation, were furnished each with a notification, signed by Thomas Fearing, chairman of the committee, that the council would meet in Charlestown [See Document No. 24] where any person choosing might appear. Thus only one week was given, if they had been disposed, to notify and warn a meeting of about sixty persons, to determine a plan, make arrangements to appear, and procure their evidences, who who were in different places thirty or forty miles distant from ourselves and each other.

As we did not recognise their council, either as a regular, civil, or ecclesiastical body ; but as an ex-parte something, or any thing, we considered that we had nothing to do ; only, as they had been invited in the name of the parish, and might be ignorant of the manner of their election, and the purpose for which they were chosen, we would notice them as gentlemen. Consequently Mr. Abner Lincoln was appointed to wait on them, and present a remonstrance (Document No. 25) disavowing their authority.

The gentlemen met at Mr. Seaton's, in Charlestown, agreeable to request, Feb. 25, 1806. After hearing Mr. Richardson and friends, and reading the documents delivered by Mr.

Lincoln, they concluded, as they were not invested with any regular power, but only an assembly of ministers, to separate again, after giving some friendly advice, and addressing a letter to each party. [Document No. 29.] Thus ended this first *impartial* council; for which so much religious desire had been expressed by Mr. Richardson in his answer to the parish, in order to satisfy his opposers that they had been misinformed—called at a place so distant as necessarily to prevent most of them from attending to hear for themselves, instead of being at Hingham, where such attendance would have been convenient, and consisting of men whom the opposers knew, and in whose election they had had some voice.

This transaction in some measure answered the purpose of Mr. Richardson and friends. They returned, claiming the triumph of going, and challenging the opposers to come forward, and that none durst. They reported, that even Dr. Morse, though repeatedly requested, refused to state any thing he knew against his character. It is true Mr. Richardson (having sagacity to see that the gentlemen had no business with the matter, and of consequence would not act, and also that we had requested those, whom we expected to call before a regular council, not to answer any calls from this body in our behalf) came forward with the effrontery and assurance of innocence, pressing the gentlemen to proceed, and affirming, that as a Christian he had a right to, and did demand his accusers to come forward, and give him a chance to defend himself. It is said he thus continued, till one of the venerable gentlemen replied, "Stop, stop, my young friend, and let me set you right. You ought, as a Christian, yourself to go and call a mutual ecclesiastical council, and then as Christians your accusers ought to meet you: but in this they have no business. You might as well have taken four or five of your neighbours, or any other persons, and then have called upon them as you now do upon us. We are no more than they would be. Go home and do this. If they then refuse, it will be unchristianlike." Nothing of this however was said by Mr. Richardson and friends on their return. Even the written advice was with reluctance shewn, and every method was used to cast blame on the opposers for not attending and answering before so reasonable a council of good men, after all the trouble and expense to give satisfaction. It was further said by them, that the opposers never wished or dared to meet Mr. Rich-

ardson on equal grounds,* and that the contrary was pretended by them only to cause delay and embarrassment: therefore now was the time for his friends to act with decision and dispatch.

The minds of the people being inflamed in this manner, while the passions were up they were hurried to petition for a *constitutional meeting*, as it was called. This meeting was petitioned for by forty or fifty persons, and the warrant came out, instead of the usual form, for "all persons of twenty-one years and upwards, qualified by the constitution to choose and contract for a public teacher of religion," &c. to meet on March 8, 1806.

The situation the parish was now in, from the proceedings at Charlestown, and other causes, became alarming to some discerning and moderate men, who liked Mr. Richardson as a preacher, but disapproved of what they supposed to be the conduct of his friends. These became interested in representing the necessity to relax from so much violence, and to attempt an interview and coalition of parties; that otherwise the parish would be broken up. This interference led the committee to think some measure must be taken to appease their minds: especially Mr. Ezra Lincoln, one of the committee, at this time discovered some reluctance to go all lengths with them. Accordingly one or two of the committee proposed a meeting of an equal number on each side to talk amicably upon the subject, and see if some plan could not be adjusted, and brought forward to the parish to be adopted at their next meeting. This was readily fallen in with by the opposers, who chose seven persons to meet an equal number of the friends to Mr. Richardson. It was agreed to meet at an early hour on Wednesday, the 5th instant, at Capt. Andrews's house; but it was between seven and eight o'clock before the friends all came; as Mr. Richardson arrived in town this afternoon, and some of them had their respects to pay him, and probably to consult on the business of the evening. At last the parish committee appeared in behalf of the friends.

This evening there was also a caucus of the friends, conducted by some agents of the committee; the result of

* Nothing could be more untrue, as the opposition never wished, or asked for more than an impartial council to prove their charges before, in the presence of the whole parish.

which was communicated the next evening to the joint committee.

The gentlemen of the joint committee agreed, that it was best to have a mutual council called: but on the vote being put whether the opposers should choose one half, and Mr. Richardson and friends the other, or either he or they, as they might agree, they divided in opinion. Mr. H. Fearing said he did not conceive any thing, unless an unanimous vote, would be binding on the individuals to support it in meeting, and that he considered there were three sides, and should adhere thereto. Mr. Ezra Lincoln said he conceived there were but two parties, and that Mr. Richardson had said he was willing for himself that the opposition should choose half, and that he believed he would now consent to it. On this it was proposed, as Mr. Richardson was nigh, to send to him, and know from himself. Two gentlemen proposed to go; but Messrs. Leavitt and H. Fearing particularly objected, and proposed to adjourn till next evening. They said they would call on him that evening or next morning, time enough for his mind to be known and communicated to his friends to direct them and gain a general sentiment. Here a suspicion was first excited, that, instead of being invited to meet in order to suggest some method to unite the parties, which should be brought forward to the parish, they were to hear and adopt a plan to be prepared by some other body. The next evening, on inquiring the result of the interview with Mr. Richardson, it was said he submitted the subject to the direction of his friends. Here it was observed, if he gave it up to them, it then reduced it to two parts only, and if they could now agree upon a number of churches among themselves to be proposed to the parish, it was no matter which was considered to be chosen by one party, or which by the other. They would be the choice of both. A method to carry this design into effect was then suggested. But Mr. H. Fearing replied, they might as well come to the point at once, and pulled out a paper from his pocket, observing it was the result of a meeting of seventy or more persons,* convened for the purpose the last evening; and asked leave to read it. The substance of this paper was, that seven

* These were petitioners for the constitutional meeting, and had agreed to stand by each other and by Mr. Richardson, if he would accept their invitation as a teacher of religion, till such time as the opposition should conform to these terms.

congregational ministers be chosen in the following manner, viz. two by the opposers, two by the friends, and two by Mr. Richardson, the seventh by Mr. Richardson and the opposers : they to be an ecclesiastical reference to hear the parties, and if they should not determine that he was an unsuitable man in his moral character for a gospel minister, then the opposers should withdraw their opposition ; but if they should determine that he was an unsuitable man, then his friends would give him up. On this he was asked, whether these were the best and only terms which could be offered us. He answered, Yes. It was replied, that it was understood, this meeting was intended to agree on a plan to be proposed to the parish ; but if it was to adopt one provided by some other body of men, as the intent had been to meet and part in harmony, they might as well drop the subject, and converse on indifferent topics. Thus ended the conference.

The next evening the opposers generally met, and heard the result from the gentlemen who had been appointed to converse with the committee. Being sensible the proposition for an interview had been made only to draw off our attention from any plan of our own, we concluded, that the gentlemen had done right in not yielding the privilege of choosing one half of the council. We now appointed three of our number to wait on Mr. Richardson the morning before the meeting, and to know of him in writing, whether he would consent for the opposition to choose one half of the council, and himself the other. To which he replied, if his friends were willing, he was. It was then remarked, that as he offered himself as a minister to the whole parish, and as his character was exceptionable to a part, he ought not, if innocent, to let any man or men prevent him from setting it right in the minds of that part, and the world. He replied, that if he left his friends, he might as well leave the parish at once. It was remarked to him, that the disguise was too thin to hide the intention, and if that was his case he had better quit the parish ; for it was desirable for a man to settle in only from its numbers and habitual harmony. If that was broken, as it would be, the case would be greatly altered. He was told also, that, as he had said he would not preach among us again till regularly ordained, it was hoped this breach of promise would not be to be added to the catalogue of complaints ; but he intimated that he thought this of little consequence.

The constitutional meeting was holden March 8th, 1806, for the following purposes:

“ 1st. To choose a moderator.

“ 2d. To see if the parish will contract with Mr. Joseph Richardson as their public teacher of religion, until such time as he shall be ordained over the church and congregation as a gospel minister. Also, to see what compensation they will make him for his services, and act on any thing relative thereto.

“ 3d. To see whether the parish will agree that a mutual ecclesiastical council should be called, agreeably to the recommendation of the ministers assembled at Charlestown, to convene in the north parish meeting-house in Hingham.”

It will be noticed here, that this warrant was issued at first by the friends, with the two first articles only, and that the third was inserted at the request of the opposition.

“ Mr. Jacob Leavitt was chosen moderator.

“ A motion was then made to pass to the third article in the warrant, and it passed in the negative.

“ The second article in the warrant was then taken up. It was voted that the parish contract with Mr. Joseph Richardson as their public teacher of religion, till such time as he shall be ordained over the church and congregation as a gospel minister, with this proviso: whenever the opposers wish to call a reference of seven gospel ministers on these conditions, viz. the opposition two, the friends two, and Mr. Richardson two, and Mr. Richardson and his opposers the seventh, to investigate his moral character; if in their opinion his moral character is not such as to disqualify him from being a minister of the gospel, then the opposers shall withdraw their opposition; but if, on the other hand, the reference shall determine that his moral character is such as to disqualify him for being a minister of the gospel, then the above contract be null and void.”*—Previous to the foregoing vote being passed, a motion was made to amend it, by permitting the opposition to choose one half

* This vote was prepared and brought to meeting, agreeably to the determination of the seventy; and it will be observed, that it was to impose a duty upon the council to be called, which no men could be supposed willing to undertake; that is, instead of determining on the truth of the charges against Mr. Richardson, either positively to denounce his moral character, or virtually to impose him on the parish as their minister.

the reference therein mentioned, and it passed in the negative.

It was afterwards voted, "That the present committee for supplying the desk be a committee to inform Mr. Richardson the result of this meeting, and if he should agree to the same, that they, or the major part of the same, contract with him on the same terms, as respects his salary, and on the same condition, as was voted and agreed on by the parish when they gave him an invitation to settle with us as a gospel minister." In this meeting it was argued by the opposers, in support of the third article, that, although Mr. Richardson ought to submit himself to a regular ecclesiastical council, mutually chosen to take up all matters between him and them, and to determine how far it would be expedient and productive of morality and piety, for him to settle here under existing circumstances; yet, to bring the dispute to a point, and put an end to it, they would on their part rest it on his moral character only, provided a suitable number, say nine, or eleven, compose the reference. If, in the opinion of such a council, no objections existed to his moral character sufficient to disqualify him for a gospel minister, they would withdraw any further objections to his settlement, reserving only the right to judge for themselves when they could profit by his preaching. In support of the reasonableness of a large number for the reference, it was observed, if what Mr. Richardson said of his innocence was just, he could be in no danger from numbers of good men; but that the opposers might be dissatisfied by a small number; because he might choose partial men, or, if not, a small number would not be so willing to decide on so important a subject as a larger. That the reference should be fairly and equitably elected, it was proposed to appoint a committee on each side to confer together and with Mr. Richardson, and to elect them by each offering a list of ten churches, from which the other might choose five; or any other way which might then be devised. Here Mr. Ezra Lincoln observed, that Mr. Richardson himself had said, he was willing the opposers should choose half the reference, and he thought his friends would do him more hurt than his opposers had ever done if they refused it. On this Mr. H. Fearing said, he knew Mr. Richardson's mind; and pulled a paper from his pocket, which was given him just before meeting (but after the opposers had waited upon him in vain for one) in which he expres-

ses himself in this equivocal manner ; that being applied to for his sentiments on the choice of the reference, he should "leave it to be determined by the parties." And well he might, as it was undoubtedly understood by him, Mr. Fearing, and others, how the matter was to be managed for the contract. The parish were also reminded of Mr. Richardson's answer to them, where he declares his readiness "to meet his accusers *face to face*, in order to satisfy them "they had been misinformed."

When the second article was taken up, the parish were desired to separate and amend the proposition, and to hire him for some given time, and not to involve themselves in a difficulty which it would be too late to prevent hereafter, and of which they might have cause to repent.

As every thing had been prepared before, nothing was regarded that was offered by the opposers, and only a part of it heard by the meeting, owing to the confusion and passion which prevailed. The business of this constitutional meeting being finished, it was dissolved, after a written protest (Document No. 26) was made against the proceedings of the meeting, and a verbal one against the legality of it.

Left thus circumstanced, the opposers called a meeting, and concluded to provide preaching at their own expense, to be performed, if agreeable to the parish, at the meeting-house, before and after the usual hours of the other public worship. If that was refused them, they determined to meet in the most convenient place they could procure. Our annual parish meeting being the next week, it was inquired whether the parish would approve of the opposition convening at their house before and after them ; but it was refused, as may be seen by Document No. 30.

The Sunday after the contract, March 9th, Messrs. Richardson and Huse performed the service of the day. Mr. Huse opened it with David's psalm of triumph over his enemies, which it was said was opened for him by Mr. Richardson, who came forward himself in the afternoon, with a text from 2 Corinthians, v. 20.

The second Sunday the opposers procured a minister to preach in the Derby Academy. Mr. Richardson, hearing this was to take place, it is said, replied, that if we could get a man to preach in that dancing hall to so few in number, he thought he might go with boldness to his meeting house, and that he would have something to the purpose. Accordingly

he did, in a discourse reflecting on the *petty gentry*, &c. as he called them. Text, Romans i. 16.

When some of the friends came to reflect how they had been taken in at their constitutional meeting; that there was no probability the opposers would ever consent to such unequal terms; and that, however great the defection might become, they were involved in a dilemma by the contract (it being of a civil nature) with the terms of which they must comply, while two friends remained, or ordain him, and then contrive to dismiss him; they were uneasy; and several of the church were also dissatisfied, that none of the ordinances were performed, as no minister had been prevailed on to exchange with him, or to preach here since the first month of Mr. Huse's preaching in this place. This caused an expedient to be made use of through the medium of his friends in the church. They now called a meeting of the church, to see if the members could not be prevailed on to have a communion at the meeting house, and meet once more all together before they parted. This proposal was objected to by the opposers, on the ground, that they had been refused a place in the house to worship, when unoccupied; and as they could not hear Mr. Richardson themselves, they could not consistently assist to introduce him to the desk of any other person, especially in the divided and disorderly state of the parish. However, by the aid of one member, who had a little interval from insanity; one who had held himself from communion for some years; and one or two who had before determined they never would take any public part, but were prevailed upon to attend meeting; a vote was obtained, by a majority of one member; there being twenty-one for, and twenty against the measure. The meeting was then dissolved, without fixing any time for the communion.

The uneasiness still increasing, some who had heretofore been his hearers, now began either to stay at home, or to attend other meetings. This again awakened his adherents to some new expedient; as they saw the first opposers were firm in their resolution to apply for a division of the parish, rather than to sit down under such a man, and that others would soon join them if they remained in this situation. They therefore agreed for Mr. Richardson to send to the opposers a proposition, directed to Gen. B. Lincoln (Document No. 27) expecting by this to make it appear that they and he were willing to meet on fair and equal grounds; but the opposers

knew too well by their proceedings at Charlestown, and other measures which they had taken, that if they could get them to comply with the small number of five, they had fixed it so as to be sure of an equilibrium, if not a turning vote, by the choice of a moderator, who was to be chosen by the parties. Mr. Richardson was answered to this by Document No. 28; to which he replied, Document No. 31: this was answered by Document No. 32. Matters remained in this situation about a week or ten days; during which time the friends were busy in shewing how fair they had been in their offers, and that the opposers refused to meet them.

The parish being in such a situation, many supposed that there never could be an union and happiness again, as the friends frequently declared they never would agree in any other man, if they had not him.

The opposers now drew a petition for a meeting, which was so just and reasonable that many who were fond of Mr. Richardson as a preacher were induced to sign it. Mr. Richardson, foreseeing by this that something must be done, and as he now principally directed matters, took the occasion to give the parish a seasonable hint of Abraham's and Lot's situation, when Abraham advised a separation; and ushered it in from the words of Solomon, chosen as a text; that "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver:" and a report was given abroad, that he would take up with a less sum than his contract, if the parish should divide.

The petition ran thus, viz. for a meeting to be called at the north meeting-house in Hingham, on May 17th, 1806, for the following purposes:

1. " To choose a moderator.
2. " To see if the parish will propose to Mr. Joseph Richardson, to agree with his opposers in calling a reference of eleven, or thirteen, congregational ministers, one of whom to be agreed on between him and his opposers, the others to be chosen one half by him, the other half by them, to inquire into his moral character, and on the following conditions: That after hearing all the allegations that shall be brought before them, against his character and conduct, together with the evidences in support of the same, and his defence, if they should then give it as their opinion, that he is a man of good moral character, and true piety, and as such do recommend him as really suitable for a gospel mi-

“ nister ; then the opposers shall withdraw their opposition :
 “ but if they should not so recommend him, then all connexion between him and the parish shall cease. And the
 “ aforesaid reference shall assemble at the meeting-house in
 “ this parish. And all the expenses attending the same, with
 “ the evidences on both sides of the question, shall be borne
 “ by the parish.”

3. “ If the parish should not agree to the foregoing proposition, to see if the parish will give their assent that the opposers be set off into a separate parish or society, by such
 “ an act as the legislature shall think proper to grant, and as
 “ is usual in like corporations.”

His friends, finding the petition was given to the parish committee for a warrant, procured the insertion of the following, as had been agreed on in caucus, viz.

4th. “ To see if the parish will unite with Mr. Joseph Richardson in proposing to his opposers a reference of five
 “ congregational ministers ; to be chosen in the following
 “ manner : one to be agreed on by the parties,* and two to
 “ be chosen by the friends, and two by the opposers, of Mr.
 “ Richardson. That no other question be submitted to the
 “ consideration of said reference than this : Whether his moral character be found by investigation really such as to disqualify him or render him an unsuitable person for a gospel
 “ minister. That the parties obligate themselves to abide by
 “ the result of said reference. Should the reference determine his moral character to be such as to disqualify him for
 “ a gospel minister, then are all his friends obliged to relinquish him ; if, on the other hand, the reference determine
 “ his moral character and conduct in life to be such as not to
 “ disqualify him for the office, then are all his opposers bound
 “ to relinquish all opposition to his settlement as the gospel
 “ minister of this parish ; that the expenses be borne by the
 “ parties :—and act thereon.”

The meeting being opened, it was “ *Voted*, 1. To choose
 “ Jacob Leavitt moderator. 2. Not to act on the second article. 3. To pass over the third article for the present, and
 “ take up the fourth. 4. That the parish agree with Mr. Joseph Richardson, as expressed in the fourth article. 5. That

* By this they intended to secure the moderator, being sure of the parish and Mr. Richardson voting for the same person ; and as there would be three parties, two would be against the opposers' one vote.

“ the parish give their assent, as stated in the third article.” The meeting was then dissolved.

In this meeting it was immediately proposed by the friends, not to act on the second article ; but was objected to by the opposition, without any effect, though urged by former arguments, and the safety of both by a large number on the reference.

On the third article being read, it was also proposed by the friends not to act on that ; but the opposers argued, if they would not consent to the advice of their ministers, who met at Charlestown for a mutual ecclesiastical council, nor yet to a reference of a suitable number of congregational ministers, it was but reasonable, as Christians, that they consent to our being set off as a separate parish ; that then they might proceed to ordain him, and each party enjoy religious worship in a separate and peaceful manner. One of their principal speakers replied, that there was no religion about it ; for his own part he confessed, that he had acted for six months without it, and that he was bold to say, if ever he was to have any, it must all come anew. On this they concluded to pass it over for the present, and to proceed to the fourth article, which the friends had put into the warrant.

This article being accepted by a majority, and proposals made for choosing a committee to carry it into effect, as the former meeting at Charlestown was not forgotten, some inquiry was made where it was expected this reference would meet, &c. ; but as no satisfactory answer was obtained, Col. Rice observed, that it was needless to spend time in this way ; that if those were the only terms they meant to give the opposition, they might as well stop here ; that they were different from what Mr. Richardson himself had expressed in his answer of acceptance to the parish to be their gospel minister, which answer he begged leave to read an extract from. After he had read it, and made some observations upon it, the parish saw fit to return to the third article ; and, agreeable to the hint given by Mr. Richardson in his sermon, voted their assent to the opposition being set off as a separate parish.

Soon after the last church meeting, one of the members, a friend to Mr. Richardson, died very suddenly ; which left the number equally divided ; but, in order to obtain a majority, several of the congregation as suddenly determined to join it.

The deacons being in the opposition, and having the table furniture in their possession, the opposers called a meeting of the whole church ; but Mr. Richardson's friends, fearing they should now be the minority, refused to attend, as they expected soon to be the majority, whenever they could get an ordained minister to come and perform the services, which Mr. Richardson encouraged them his brother Bentley would do the next Sunday.

The opposers in the church met at the north meeting-house, June 7, 1806, agreeable to the warning ; and voted that the table furniture of the church should be equally divided between the adherents of Mr. Richardson and his opponents ; and further, that the deacons be authorised to lend to the adherents of Mr. Richardson any part of said furniture more than one half, they giving their receipt for the same.

Mr. Bentley came, according to expectation, and (to use an irreverent expression said to have been applied to the occasion) *chucked** eight males and as many females into the church, making out a full majority for any future purpose ; and gave, it is said, his opinion, that they might now proceed as they saw fit, without any regard to the minority, as they had taken themselves off.

-He then went on to the southward the ensuing week, to procure, as was supposed, his men for the intended ordination.

The friends of Mr. Richardson, now feeling their strength in the church, agreed on a meeting to be holden June 19, in the north meeting-house, in order to see if the church would renew their concurrence with the parish in calling Mr. Richardson, as obtained by private signatures. The opposers, hearing of this meeting, went to it ; but there was an objection made to their acting on this occasion. Mr. Isaac Cushing said, that he had been informed by a person on whose judgment he could depend [probably Mr. Bentley] that they had no right to act. In reply to him it was observed, that members once admitted into a church, were considered as belonging to it until they were regularly transferred to another, or excommunicated. If this was correct, as there had been no transfer of those members, it was requested a vote might

* Robison mentions an order of the Illuminati, that had arrived to that state of perfectibility, as to display the table of our Lord and Saviour to turn it into ridicule.

be taken to know whether they were considered as excommunicated. This the moderator did not choose to notice ; and they were suffered to tarry in the meeting-house.

The church proceeded as though the minority had nothing to do with them. Instead of the eldest deacon's presiding, as is usual, they chose Thomas Fearing moderator, and Isaac Cushing clerk, for the present meeting, though the standing clerk was present. They then passed the following votes :

" Voted, to renew their concurrence with the parish in calling Mr. Joseph Richardson to be their gospel minister, as obtained by signatures.*

" Voted, to call a council to ordain him.

" Voted, to send to seven churches.

" Voted, that Mr. Richardson choose three of the council.

" Voted, that Seth Lincoln inform Mr. Richardson, that he has the liberty of choosing three of the council.

" Voted, to choose a committee of three to write to the council, viz. Thomas Fearing, Isaac Cushing and Seth Lincoln.

" Voted, that the ordination be on July 2, 1806."

The churches agreed to be sent to, though a part of them were ostensibly chosen by the church, were all, it is presumed, pointed out by Mr. Bentley and Mr. Richardson, as they were brought ready prepared to the meeting ; and the friends themselves declared in the meeting that they did not know the men. The opposers observed, that they wished for men with whom they were acquainted ; but that they knew nothing of the characters of those who had been designated, excepting that of Mr. Bentley, who in this particular case had already given his opinion, and therefore could not be thought to be impartial. These suggestions were however

* This alludes to the first church meeting being called, when they protested against the doings of the parish, at which time the church consisted of forty-seven male members, including Mr. J. Beal, who had partook in the church nearly forty years, and in some instances acted in their affairs, but was never regularly transferred from his own. Five of the whole number, by reason of age and otherwise, were unable, and probably some always would be, to attend any meeting ; and there were three others that refused to take any part in the matter. Before this meeting, individuals, friends to Mr. Richardson, went among them to obtain signatures in his behalf, giving as a reason to some, that it was the only method to keep peace in the parish ; but finding they should fall short of a majority of the whole, none of the friends attended the meeting, but continued the paper until Mr. Bentley's new members gave them a decided majority.

disregarded by Mr. Richardson's friends, who did not think fit to substitute any other, but voted them all in together, as had of late been practised in the parish meetings.

The next week a parish meeting was called, to see if they would concur with the church in their call to Mr. Richardson.

As the friends now considered themselves, from Mr. Bentley's opinion, as acting in a clear, ecclesiastical manner, and as the opposers had preferred a petition to the General Court for a separation of the parish, there probably would have been an issue of the contest, had it not been that Mr. H. Fearing, our member at Court, refused his assent to the Court's committee, appointed to set off parishes, reporting to give leave to bring in a bill, without an order of notice ; and that some among the friends, exulting in their prospect of an ordination, began to threaten that the opposition should never be set off. These circumstances, with Mr. Richardson's letter to Gen. Lincoln (Document No. 49) induced the opposition, in a meeting for the purpose of consulting what was best to be done, to offer to the principal characters among the friends, that if they would sign a paper, giving their assent that the opposition should be set off as a parish, and that they would not try to obstruct it, then they would make no objections on their part to Mr. Richardson's being settled in this place. This offer was rejected.

The majority thus manifesting their intention not only to have Mr. Richardson for their own minister, but also to compel his opposers to sit under and support him, or change their denomination, the latter determined to employ the little time they had in making arrangements to meet such a council as might convene for the purpose of ordaining him, and to state and support their objections in the best manner they could prepare to in so short a time. For this purpose the following gentlemen were chosen a committee, viz. the Hon. B. Lincoln, Col. Nathan Rice, Samuel Norton, Esq. Abner Lincoln, Esq. Thomas Loring, Dea. William Cushing, Dr. Levi Lincoln, jun. Dr. Robert Thaxter and Jerom Cushing ; who had only ten days to go to Boston, Charlestown, Cambridge, Groton, Concord and Westford for evidences and attested documents.

They found that the Rev. Dr. Morse was under a pre-engagement on the Tuesday appointed for the first day's sitting of the council ; and that Mr. Rockwood had some business to attend. They however would endeavour, together with Dea-

con Goodwin's son, to come the next day if possible. Mr. Ely, another witness, was in the state of Connecticut.

The time appointed for the council to meet was the first of July, at Mr. Hawkes Fearing's tavern hall, at nine o'clock, A. M. to hear any objections that should be made against Mr. Richardson. The committee of the opposition appeared at the hour, and waited till past ten o'clock, without finding any of the council in the hall, although they learnt that Mr. Bentley, and others of the council, were below in a room with the committee and friends that belonged to the church. The opposition committee inquired of Mr. H. Fearing, the reason why the council did not appear, to proceed to business, agreeable to notice given. He informed them, that they were not ready; and, as all the council had not arrived, it was probable they would not proceed to business until after dinner, and that it was therefore needless for this committee to tarry. When the council should be ready, word would be sent them. On this the committee retired, and waited until past five o'clock, P. M. when they received a billet from Mr. Richardson, directed to Gen. Lincoln, informing him, that the council were assembled, and were ready to hear any witnesses in support of the allegations contained in the protest signed by himself and others, and that an immediate attendance was requested.

The committee went directly up, and found the hall, in which the council were assembled, guarded by a constable with his staff, and an assistant with a cane. After being interrogated whether they were a committee in behalf of the opposition, they were admitted; but admittance was refused to any other persons, who were not specially pointed out by the friends. The council had previously organized themselves, and were surrounded by the parish committee, and that part of the church who were adherents of Mr. Richardson; Mr. Barker, the moderator, having arrived about half an hour after eleven o'clock, A. M.

The council consisted of a deputation from four churches only, out of the seven intended, among whom were three ministers, with each a delegate, and two delegates from Tewksbury, one of them Mr. Richardson's father-in-law, and the other said to be his cousin.

It appeared that the council, or a part of them, previous to admitting the opposition committee, had heard such statements as Mr. Richardson and his adherents had thought fit to

make, and that they had proceeded under the impression that the opposers were not considered a part of the society, and contributed nothing toward the support of the parish expenses ; which were not facts. It further appeared that they intended no allegations should be admitted in addition to those contained in the protest, alluded to in Mr. Richardson's billet to Gen. Lincoln.

The committee presented a written request to the council, that the question, which was to be submitted to their decision, should be discussed in the meeting-house, that all persons interested might have an opportunity of hearing and judging for themselves. In support of this request it was urged, that if the business was conducted in private, appearances would be suspicious, and the result unsatisfactory ; that the most effectual way for Mr. Richardson to vindicate his character, and place it in a fair light to the world, if he was really innocent, was, to have it publicly investigated ; that on the other hand, the characters of Mr. Richardson's opposers were implicated, they having been accused of fabricating the charges against him ; and therefore were in justice entitled to the privilege at least of proving their own innocence in a public manner. But it was all unavailing.

This request being refused, it was then observed to the council, that as the opposition had thought it expedient to solicit the advice of an ecclesiastical council, in respect to the conduct they ought to pursue on the occasion, they had invited from their churches the Rev. Dr. Reed of Bridgewater, Rev. Mr. Harris of Dorchester, Rev. Mr. Porter of Roxbury, and the Rev. Mr. Alleyne of Duxbury, with each a delegate ; that they were then in session, and that to be able to form a correct opinion, and advise understandingly, it was necessary they should be acquainted with all the facts on both sides of the question ; for which purpose it was requested that they might be admitted. This request was denied, and admittance also refused to any of the clergymen who were in town.

In all these objections, and in every part of the trial, Mr. Bentley took a very distinguished part in advocating the candidate and the proceedings of the parish ; so much so, that it would not be improper to call him an attorney for the party, rather than one of an ecclesiastical council. Even one of the friends in the church noticed the good effect of his offices to them so much as to say, if they had given him five hundred dollars it would not have been too much.

The opposition committee objected to Mr. Richardson's ordination, for two general reasons:

1. Because the manner and acceptance of his call were irregular and unprecedented.

2. Because they believed him an unsuitable person, in point of moral character, to be employed in the gospel ministry.

In proof of the first they stated the manner of the parish proceeding without the consent of the church, and Mr. Richardson's knowledge thereof, and the church's protest against the same.

In the second a number of charges of a more specific nature were contained, viz.

1. That Mr. Richardson had been guilty of violating one of the most solemn contracts in social life, for which he stood condemned in a court of justice.

2. That he had been guilty of base ingratitude, and created much disturbance, by divulging and misrepresenting a confidential communication made to him, at his request, by one who had patronised him, and conducted toward him in the most friendly manner.

3. That he had avowed principles inconsistent with the peace and happiness of civil society.

4. That, independent of the foregoing instances, he had been guilty of deception, prevarication and falsehood.

5. That he had, by his improper speeches and conduct, manifested an unguarded, petulant and quarrelsome disposition.

6. That he had, by his acceptance and residence here, in an irregular and unprecedented manner, made himself an instrument to destroy the peace of this parish, and the happiness of individuals;* and although the consequences were long since well known to him, he has manifested a determination still to remain here.

In support of these several charges were brought forward the documents subjoined to this narrative, including a number of his letters written to Miss Robinson; and the personal testimony of the Rev. Dr. Morse, Messrs. Rockwood and Goodwin, together with a number of his misrepresentations, and false relations of facts, since he had been in Hingham, with

* Many were constrained to go and hear him against their inclination, by a husband, or father, or wrought upon by fear, through some combination against their interest, or otherwise.

the testimonies in support of the same, but they were not admitted by the council, who wished to be *a few minutes* by themselves, as they had been a considerable time in session, and felt exhausted. As Dr. Morse had not yet arrived, with Messrs. Rockwood and Goodwin, the council retired.

After waiting for some time, the committee began to suspect that there might possibly be some misunderstanding between them and the council, with regard to their being further heard, or that the council had determined to hear no more ; and handed in a written request, that the ordination might be postponed, until the fate of the petition for a separation might be known.

Immediately after this was sent to the council, a letter from the opposition's council was received, containing their advice.

On this another written request, founded on this advice, was sent to the council, viz. That the ordination might be postponed, until a mutual council should be called to investigate the subject, and determine on the expediency of Mr. Richardson's settlement in this place.

To neither of these requests did the council think fit to return an answer ; and in a very short time it was proclaimed that they would be in the meeting-house at half after twelve o'clock.

Just before the council separated, Dr. Morse and Messrs. Rockwood and Goodwin arrived at the door, it being no later than half past eleven, A. M. The council being made acquainted with it, Mr. Bentley said, " We cannot help that ;" and they immediately dispersed.

The moderator was sought, and found, and Dr. Morse introduced to him. He informed Mr. Barker, that he had made great exertions to come here ; that, such was the feeble state of his health, nothing but business of the greatest importance would have induced him to have undertaken the journey ; that he had come by the request of the opposition to Mr. Richardson,* and in justice to his own character (it having been said he durst not appear) as well as to the cause of that religion he was bound to protect ; and, after making some pertinent remarks on the subject that engaged his pre-

* Where was Mr. Richardson now, that he did not come forward, and solicit, with the earnestness that he did at Charlestown, for his accusers to meet him, and give him an opportunity to vindicate himself? If he had done this, undoubtedly Dr. Morse and Messrs. Rockwood and Goodwin would have been attended to.

sent attention, said, he could prove, by such evidence as would be considered conclusive in a court of justice, that Mr. Richardson did not pay that regard to truth which a minister ought to do; and that he had avowed principles fatal to the peace of civil society, and in one instance at least had acted on those principles. The moderator said he would communicate the matter to the council. The Doctor, after waiting a time with the opposers' committee without hearing from him, finally sent a letter, in order that he might have an explicit answer whether he could be heard or not. No answer was given him, and in a short time the procession formed, and set out for the meeting-house, with their candidate, under the same guard that had protected them in the hall, secure and inaccessible to any but those pointed out for admittance, with music, playing a *march*.

The result of the ordaining council, as given by themselves, is as follows, viz.

Hingham, July 1, 1806.

At the house of Mr. Hawkes Fearing, innholder, in said Hingham.

Present, by letters missive—

From the first church in Middlebury, Plymouth County, Mass.

Rev. *Joseph Barker* and Capt. *William Thompson*.

From the church in Plympton, Plymouth County, Mass.

Rev. *John Briggs* and Mr. *George Sampson*.

From the second church in Salem, Essex County, Mass.

Rev. *William Bentley* and Capt. *Benjamin Ward*.

From the church in Tewksbury, Middlesex County, Mass.

Mr. *John Spaulding* and Mr. *Jacob Marshall*, with certificates.

The church and congregation of the first parish in Hingham having unanimously agreed, that said churches, represented as above, be a council, with full powers to hear all ecclesiastical differences relating to the re-settlement of said church,

The following officers were chosen :

Rev. *Joseph Barker*, moderator,

Rev. *William Bentley*, scribe.

The council, having on that day, and by adjournment, considered all the objections against the candidate, and having

examined the recommendation of the Rev. Dr. Cummings of Billerica, given to the trustees of Charlestown schools, while the candidate was pursuing his theological studies at the house of said Dr. Cummings, of great reputation in our churches, and having received the favourable testimonies of the trustees of said schools, and the selectmen of Charlestown; and having heard no objections to the life and doctrine of Mr. Joseph Richardson while in Hingham; and having certificates of his early admission into the Christian church, and of his exemplary deportment, from the professor of divinity (Dr. Smith) of Dartmouth College, with good assurances of his reputation during his collegiate life; did unanimously, on the second of July, 1806, agree to proceed to his ordination, having satisfied themselves of his qualifications and recommendations for the office of a Christian minister.

JOSEPH BARKER, *Moderator.*

WILLIAM BENTLEY, *Scribe.*

A true copy,

Attest. JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

It is left for the reader to determine whether those reverend gentlemen would not have given as just and candid an account of the proceedings in the council, if they had left out the words, "*And having heard no objections to the life and doctrine of Mr. Joseph Richardson while in Hingham,*" and introduced their doings with the words, "*On that evening, and the next morning, we heard a part of the objections that would have been brought against him, if time could have been allowed.*"

Some gentlemen, admiring how a parish which had always been so averse to Hopkinsianism, could have made choice of a preacher of sentiments congenial with those of the Rev. Mr. Barker, questioned him, whether Mr. Richardson had been ordained on Mr. Bentley's *political* creed, or on his *religious* tenets; who replied, that Mr. Richardson had answered him to all questions with as much satisfaction as any candidate he ever examined. And again, to another, that time did not admit of so many questions being put as sometimes were; but that all the essential ones, of total depravity, special election, &c. were put to him in the council by Mr. Briggs and himself, in which Mr. Richardson professed his belief. This being heard of in Hingham, Mr. Richardson furnished the following to his friends, to convince them he was not, nor did pretend to be, an Hopkinsian: viz.

“ I profess a serious belief of the sacred scriptures of the
 “ old and new testament, as containing a revelation from
 “ God, graciously intended for the instruction of mankind in
 “ the great things pertaining to their everlasting salvation ;
 “ and particularly in the great doctrines of fall in Adam, and
 “ recovery by Jesus Christ ; of pardon and salvation on con-
 “ dition of faith and repentance, and of the influences and
 “ aids of the Holy Spirit, promised to those who ask, to ena-
 “ ble them to fulfil the conditions of the gospel covenant ; of
 “ an universal governing Providence ; of the resurrection of
 “ the dead ; of a future judgment, and future state of re-
 “ wards and punishments.

“ This is the confession of faith, *verbatim*, as submitted to
 “ the consideration of the council for my ordination.

August 15, 1806.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

A true copy from the original.”

After Mr. Richardson was ordained over the church and congregation of the north parish in Hingham, his friends deputed a committee to the General Court, in order to hinder the opposition from being set off as a separate society. They however failed in their purpose. The opposition obtained an act of incorporation, built themselves a house of worship, and gave a unanimous call to Mr. Henry Colman to settle with them as their minister ; which call he accepted. On the evening preceding the day assigned for the dedication of the house, and the ordination of Mr. Colman, the council convened on that business were in session. At this late stage, it could hardly have been expected that any further interruptions from Mr. Richardson's society would have occurred ; but they determined not to let this *last opportunity* pass by neglected ; they accordingly sent in a remonstrance to the council, against the church over which Mr. Colman was to be ordained being recognized as the *first* church. In this circumstance there was something more than the mere *precedency* of denomination ; it involved the *property* of the plate, &c. which had hitherto belonged to them in common, as the *first church*. We shall not stop to inquire what the genuine spirit of *Christianity*, unalloyed with the spirit of *animosity*, might have dictated with respect to the disposal of those consecrated articles. However the tendency of the remonstrance, at this late hour, might have been to embarrass and delay the proceedings of the council, it was not suffered to have that ef-

fect. Though there was ground for a claim (as matters had been conducted) to retain the denomination of the *first* church, by those who had rejected Mr. Richardson for their minister, and consequently to hold the church property, yet as peace, not contention, was their object, they unanimously agreed to wave all considerations of interest in this respect—to give up all church property—and to take the name of the *third* church; and on this foundation the solemnities of dedication and ordination were the next day performed, and the third church and society happily settled under the pastoral care of the minister they had unanimously chosen—yet not without regret, that a large society, which had subsisted with an uncommon degree of harmony and good fellowship, almost from the first settlement of the country, should be thus unnecessarily divided, through a spirit of contention, fanned into a flame by one whose sacred office made it his duty to quench it.

DOCUMENTS COPIED.



[No. I.]

I NEVER introduced a Mr. Gleason or any other person in any company, calling him, or pretending that any of my companions were, Joseph Richardson. Last winter I horse-whipped said Richardson at the hotel in Charlestown, which was occasioned by his abusive language in repeatedly giving me the lie—and in which discussion Mr. Gleason was not named or alluded to.

D. PARKER.

Charlestown, Oct. 18, 1805.

July 26, 1806.—N. B. As to the time alluded to above, I do not particularly recollect the date. On being questioned again to this point, I am not able to ascertain more particularly—but never had but one affray with Richardson.

[No. II.]

DEAR SIR,

You have requested me to state to you the origin and course of the affray which took place between Daniel Parker, Esq. and Mr. Richardson, at the hotel in Charlestown. Some months having since elapsed, I have almost forgotten the particulars which began the contest; but if my recollection does not very much deceive me, it originated in a conversation between them, about a play, or farce, which they had seen represented at the theatre a few evenings previous; a part of this conversation is almost lost to me, particularly that which passed before the venom of Richardson displayed itself; when this appeared I grew more attentive; and Mr. Parker repeated many facts which he had before been suggesting, referring to me for their truth; to all which I could *at that time* have testified. Richardson, during this conversation of Mr. Parker's, which was addressed to me, would apply to every sentence some base and unbecoming epithet; such as, *You lie—You dirty puppy—You are a noted liar—You are a fool, &c. &c.* These indecencies he continued to repeat; during which time Parker bore them with a calmness unexampled, until by their reiteration he became indignant, and left the table, saying, Mr. Richardson, I will

settle the business with you after dinner ; to which Richardson replied, *Leave the room, you dirty puppy ; you are below my notice.* Mr. Parker then retired ; I soon left the room, and found Parker in the entry, with a whip under his coat. I told him I hoped he would be able to settle the affair without any further difficulty ; that I conceived Mr. Richardson to be the aggressor ; and that on reflection he must be sensible of it. Parker said it was his desire to settle it, but he had been treated very ill by Mr. Richardson, and that unless he (Richardson) would make some concession, he was determined to whip him. It now being two o'clock, Mr. Richardson left the room to go to school ; and in passing through the entry, Parker asked him what he meant by his conduct at dinner ; to which Richardson replied, I meant what I now repeat, that *you are a dirty, lying puppy*, and I shall repeat it on all occasions. With this Parker struck him with the whip, and they immediately clenched : but finding Richardson began to pull hair, and bite, two persons stepped between and parted them. The above affray, if I mistake not, took place about the month of April or May last.

Your obedient servant,

October, 1805.*

WILLIAM TUCKERMAN.

The statement which Mr. Tuckerman has made is correct, so far as it comes within my recollection. As it respects the particular language which Mr. Richardson made use of at the table, and when the esquire was leaving the room, I do not recollect, but it was of a low kind. After they went into the entry I was not a witness.

PEARSON NICHOLS.

N. B. I do not think Mr. Richardson so much to blame as people in general will imagine from seeing this statement, as the esquire was from time to time joking him very much to his displeasure.

P. N.

[No. III.]

SIR,

Concord, November 6, 1805.

I this morning received your letter of yesterday, requesting information concerning Mr. Joseph Richardson's conduct and character in Charlestown. I don't hesitate to comply with your request.

In October, 1804, I became a boarder, with Messrs. Rogers, Ely, Rockwood and Richardson, in the family of Mr. Adams, in Charlestown. I was not then acquainted with Mr. Richardson, and had heard of nothing derogatory to his character, excepting his treatment to the lady whom he addressed while a student at college. Concerning this, as it is the foundation of a law-suit, now pending in this county, you have probably sufficient information. Some time in the course of last winter, it was currently reported in Charlestown, that Dr. Morse, in conversation with Mr. Richardson, had spoken unfavourably of some gentlemen in that town. As it caused much disturbance, and as the Doctor had uniformly conducted in a very friendly manner toward the gentlemen boarding with Mr. Richardson, they were induced to make some inquiries of him respecting the transaction. He did not deny having communicated Dr. Morse's opinion of these gentlemen to them. As this opinion of the Doctor's appeared to have been given in a confidential way to Mr. Richardson, and at his urgent request, he was then charged with treachery to the Doctor. Mr. Richardson then attempted to justify his conduct, saying, he had not done so much mischief as he could have done, and advanced this extraordinary principle—That if, even in a confidential manner, an opinion were given in his presence, unfavourable to an absent person, he always considered himself at liberty to divulge it. The gentlemen then board-

ing with Mr. Adams, considering it disreputable and dangerous to live longer with Mr. Richardson, informed Mr. Adams, in Mr. Richardson's presence, that they did not choose to live longer with him, and desired Mr. Adams either to dismiss Mr. Richardson, or make out their bills and they would remove. Mr. Richardson, without further trouble left the house the same day. I ought to add further, that I frequently heard, from respectable authority, that Mr. Richardson, in making the communication from Dr. Morse to those gentlemen implicated, made so many alterations and additions, that it would require no small degree of ingenuity to make it pass for truth. I have since been informed, that Mr. Richardson's conduct had been such, before this time, as to deprive him of the liberty of visiting one or two respectable families with whom he had previously been acquainted; and within a short time after I believe his character was considered as wholly lost.

As Mr. Richardson is a republican, it may be suspected that his unpopularity with federalists arose from a difference in political opinions. That this is not the case, however, appears from this circumstance, that he has, within a few months past, been twice whipped by his republican brothers in Charlestown—an extent to which I believe no federalist has proceeded, whatever his demerits may have been. I am not surprised that you are desirous of preventing his being settled in any town in which you are particularly interested; I should suppose that every honest man would exert himself to prevent his being settled in his parish as a minister, as he would to prevent the entrance of the yellow fever.

With respect,

Your obedient servant,

E. GAY, Esq.

SAMUEL HOAR, JUN.

[No. IV.]

GENTLEMEN,

Boston, November 9, 1805.

In answer to your queries relative to my acquaintance with Mr. Richardson, you will accept the following statement, and use it according to your discretion. I remained in Charlestown a year and a half after Mr. Richardson commenced his residence there. When he came to Charlestown, I knew nothing against his character, my opinion was favourable, my feelings friendly, and my attentions cheerful. During the former part of his residence in Charlestown, my acquaintance with him was however but general. It gave me but little knowledge of the man, but convinced me, however, that his character was doubtful and concealed. After he had been in Charlestown four months, it was our fortune to board in the same house, in company with Mr. Hoar, Mr. Rogers and Mr. Ely. Here he soon became known. His disguise, though sufficient for occasional interviews, was inadequate to concealment under habitual intercourse. A variety of circumstances about this time made him as well known abroad as at home, and fixed such a character as terminated his intercourse with many (and as far as I know all) respectable families in the place. He had not boarded long with the gentlemen above mentioned, before he was considered (both on account of his character abroad, and his conduct at home) a disagreeable and improper associate. The resolve was unanimous, that we would board in the family with him no longer; and at our united request he left the house. Then all intercourse with Mr. Richardson ceased, and from that time I have not had the least personal acquaintance with him. Many reports have been cur-

rent concerning him, the least of which, if true, would disqualify him for his profession, and I know no reason to doubt them.*

With respect, gentlemen,
Yours, &c.

E. ROCKWOOD.

[No. V.]

Charlestown, November, 1805.

Being requested to state what I know relative to a certain transaction of Mr. Joseph Richardson,

I hereby certify, that in June, July, August, and some other months, in the year of our Lord 1804, I was personally acquainted, and boarded with the said Richardson; that sometime in the latter part of June he received an invitation to dine with the republican party in Charlestown; that the said Richardson informed me he had accepted of the invitation, and agreed to perform some services at the table. And I do hereby certify, that a few days before the celebration of independence (which I think was on the 2d or 3d day of July) said Richardson informed me, he was going to inquire of Dr. Morse whether it was proper for him to dine with the party. I remonstrated against his going to the Doctor, and observed, it would only be to tempt him, because he had resolved, and promised, to dine; and well knew that the Doctor was in principle opposed to him and his party. Richardson replied to me, something to this effect: "I am the Doctor's pupil, and shall get something out of him." Accordingly he went to see Dr. Morse, and after he returned observed, that he would be even with the Doctor, or something of this nature, which conveyed to my mind the idea of revenge. Because I disapproved of his conduct and speeches regarding his instructor, he frequently used very ill language, calling his fellow student, "*a dirty puppy, a knave, a rascal, a mean, low-lived, insignificant scoundrel;*" which expressions and many other, indicative of a very passionate disposition, were very frequently used by him.

EZRA STILES ELY.

[No. VI.]

For reasons given at large, verbally, to gentlemen from the town of Hingham, both friends and opposers of Mr. Joseph Richardson, and at their particular request—I hereby certify, that I consider the said Richardson, in point of moral character, an unsuitable man to be employed in the gospel ministry.

Should future occurrences render it necessary, a detail of these reasons in writing shall be given.

JEDEDIAH MORSE.

Charlestown, November 1, 1805.

[No. VII.]

Called upon by a number of respectable gentlemen from the town of Hingham to state certain facts within my knowledge, relative to Mr. Joseph Richardson, among others verbally communicated were the following, which by request I now state in writing, viz. That from the time said Richardson came to reside in this town, till the last November (1804) he

* It is worthy of notice, that Mr. Rockwood lived in the family with him, and after writing this, came with Dr. Morse and Mr. Goodwin, with a desire of seeing Mr. Richardson face to face, and giving in detail the foundation of those sentiments, to convince whomsoever it concerned, that his opposers had not been "misinformed." But it was so contrived that he and they could not be heard.

occasional communion with the church under my pastoral care. Since that time, though a constant resident in this town, he has seldom, if ever, attended public worship on the sabbath, to my knowledge, in the congregational society, where before he usually worshipped when in town; and not once has he been present at the administration of the Lord's supper. The known cause of his thus withdrawing from statedly worshipping and communing with said congregational church and society (viz. his ungrateful treatment of his instructor and patron) would have rendered his presence at the communion table, had he appeared there as usual, unacceptable to many members of the church, and particularly so to myself. Indeed, if he had presented himself at the communion table, I had determined to have requested him to withdraw, believing, that in so doing I should have been supported by a respectable number of my Christian friends.

As Mr. Richardson has manifested no disposition to heal the breach which he made by his offensive conduct in respect to a like case with that mentioned, my determination remains unaltered.

Charlestown, November 8, 1805.

JEDEDIAH MORSE.

[No. VIII.]

DEAR SIR,

Billerica, November 26, 1805.

I was not a little surprised to hear that my letter, recommending Mr. Joseph Richardson to the patronage of Dr. Morse, had been made use of to vindicate said Richardson against unfavourable reports concerning him, which refer to instances of his conduct posterior to the date of said letter; as if I had pledged myself for his future correct behaviour.

The letter aforesaid expresses my ideas of Mr. Richardson at the time when it was written; at which time I presumed, with good reason, as I thought, that by a propriety of conduct he would secure and enjoy the benefit of that patronage which I solicited for him. If he has forfeited and lost it by improper behaviour, my expectations are disappointed, but I do not feel myself amenable.

As to the affair between him and the young woman, who charges him with a violation of a promise of marriage (which he denies) and who has on that ground sued him for damages, I would only observe, that as there was never any suggestion of criminal intimacy that I know of, I am fully persuaded, that had the affair never been prosecuted in the law (as it was almost a year after his leaving my house) it would soon have been buried in oblivion by the generality of his acquaintance, among the venial imprudences of unexperienced youth, which do not essentially affect character. The law-suit is not yet ended.

If you wish for a statement of Mr. Richardson's conduct since he left Billerica, I am not able to give it, as I have had very little correspondence with him since that time. I know there are reports in circulation respecting him, calculated to wound his reputation; some of which are so circumstanced as to lay a foundation to suspect that all is not right. The impression of such suspicions may reasonably restrain me from recommending without further inquiry and satisfaction; at the same time Christian candour forbids a *decided censure*, especially as I have not conversed with Mr. Richardson on the subject, and know not what defence he would make, or his friends on his behalf. Whatever may be my apprehensions respecting the result of a thorough inquiry, I feel myself obliged, for want of sufficient light and evidence, to suspend my judgment upon the question whether he is guilty or innocent in whole or in part. I add, that when I joined in approbating him as a candidate for the ministry, I viewed him as a fair character, of competent literature and talents, and as a firm believer in the gospel doctrine of salvation. What he is now in re-

gard to faith or character, is another question, which I am not better able to answer than yourself.

In regard to the doctrines, religious sentiments and ministerial abilities of a candidate, if he cannot recommend himself he must take the consequence. Persuaded that the Christian society in Hingham are not destitute of competent judges, I presume they will never settle a man who cannot give them rational satisfaction on these points, either by his public performances or private conversation, though they have no other objection.

From your representations I feel anxiously concerned for the good people of Hingham, and do, with the utmost sincerity, implore the Father of Lights to grant them that wisdom which is profitable to direct.

With respectful consideration,

Mr. ABNER LINCOLN, I am, Sir, your obedient friend. Adieu.
Preceptor.

HENRY CUMMINGS.

[No. IX.]

Hanover, (N. H.) August, 1802.

It is hereby certified, that Mr. Joseph Richardson is a member of the Church of Christ, at Dartmouth College; and that he is in regular and good standing. He is recommended to the Christian care, fellowship and communion of any regular Church of Christ, wherever God in his Providence may call him to be, or to reside.

By JOHN SMITH,

Pastor of said Church, at Dartmouth College.

[No. X.]

At a meeting of the Andover Association, at the Rev. Dr. Symmes's, December 4th, 1803, Mr. Joseph Richardson having applied for approbation, and having satisfied ourselves respecting his moral character, theological studies and qualifications—we do hereby recommend him to the notice and employment of the Churches of Christ, wherever God in his Providence shall call him.

WM. SYMMES, *Moderator.*

JESSE FRENCH, *Scribe.*

[No. XI.]

REVEREND SIR,

Billerica, January 2, 1804.

This is to inform you, that Mr. Joseph Richardson, the bearer, was born in Billerica; has been for the most part in his native town, and in a town adjoining; his character is fair, as far as I have heard. He has had the reputation of good morals from his youth up. I believe you will find him a young gentleman of good disposition and promising talents, and worthy of your friendly patronage. He taught a school last year in Billerica for several months, to universal satisfaction; and I have no doubt but he is competent to the business of the school in which I understand he is engaged at Charlestown.

Having sufficient credentials relative to his education and Christian profession at Dartmouth College, and having also an approbation as a candidate for the ministry, from the association to which I belong, it is needless for me to enlarge in his recommendation. It may be proper, however, to observe, that not being in affluent circumstances, the expenses of his education involved him in such circumstances as made it expedient for him to commence a candidate for the sacred science aforesaid, sooner than he would otherwise have done. That holy employment

being his object, I wish him success and all needful encouragement in the prosecution of his theological studies.

With respectful consideration,

Your friend and brother,

Rev. J. MORSE.

HENRY CUMMINGS.

[No. XII.]

Charlestown, August 16, 1805.

We the subscribers, trustees of Charlestown free schools, having been applied to by Mr. Hawkes Fearing, of Hingham, to know the character of Mr. Joseph Richardson, who now keeps the school under our care, say, as far as we have had an opportunity of knowing him, we find in him a very good school-master; and his character in all other respects; as far as our own knowledge of him, is that of an honest man, and one whom we should be glad to retain in the school over which he now presides.

DAVID GOODWIN;
THOMAS HARRIS, } Trustees.
MATTHEW BRIDGE,

[No. XIII.]

Charlestown, November 15, 1805.

This may certify whom it may concern, that Mr. Joseph Richardson boarded with me for a considerable time in the year 1804; and his conduct towards me and my family was at all times very civil and respectful, and such as gave us no reason to complain.

A. ADAMS.

[No. XIV.]

Charlestown, November 15, 1805.

This may certify whom it may concern, that Mr. Joseph Richardson boarded in the house with me a number of months, and I considered him a quiet, peaceable boarder.

PEARSON NICHOLS.

[No. XV.]

Charlestown, October 25, 1805.

We the subscribers, Selectmen of Charlestown, having been desired to express our opinion of Mr. Joseph Richardson, since his residence in this town, are compelled in justice to say, that as a gentleman he is highly respectable, frank, open and sociable; that in the capacity of an instructor he has given very general satisfaction, both to parents and children; and as a moral and good man, we believe his character to be fair and exemplary. We do not hesitate to say, further, that if any illiberal surmises or dishonourable charges have been hinted to this gentleman's prejudice, we believe them to be wholly groundless. We further give him the testimony of our highest respect and best wishes, and should esteem it a misfortune to lose him as a public instructor.

NATHANIEL HAWKINS,
RICHARD FROTHINGHAM,
DANIEL TUFTS,
SOLOMON PHIPPS,
JONATHAN TEAL,
JABEZ FROTHINGHAM,
TIMOTHY THOMPSON, } Selectmen
of
Charlestown.

[No. XVI.]

DEAR SIR,

Charlestown, December 19, 1805.

I received yours of the 14th instant, in which you inform me a report is in circulation in your parish that I should not, if again called upon, give my opinion as I have heretofore done with the other Trustees in favour of Mr. Joseph Richardson's moral character. I know not from what quarter they get such fabulous reports: they are so untrue, that I now confirm my former good opinion of him. I have frequently been in company with him, and often find him at Dr. Stillman's lectures. I observe when returning home with him, that he always introduces religious subjects, and appears to be fond of conversing upon them. I am always ready to support the character of the innocent and virtuous, which I think is the character of Mr. Richardson; and in addition thereto can conscientiously say, as one of the trustees, I am very much pleased with him as a school-master; I can further say the scholars under his care both love and respect him, as far as I can find out—and should it please the great Head of the Church to settle him among you, I pray God to make him a rich and lasting blessing to the dear Church and Congregation. And may the God of love and peace dwell with you all—is the prayer of your friend,

DAVID GOODWIN.

To H. FEARING.

[No. XVII.]

Hingham, December 9, 1805.

This certifies, that Mr. Joseph Richardson and I fitted for College together at Tewksbury, with the Rev. Mr. Barton; that we were classmates and chums the whole time, being near two years; that we entered Dartmouth College together, and roomed together and boarded together the four years of our residence at College; and that we lived peaceably and happily: That since we graduated we have corresponded together by letter, and frequently visited each other; that our acquaintance has been intimate, and our friendship I believe sincere: That Mr. Richardson sustained a distinguishedly religious character whilst we were fitting for College, and whilst we were at College; that he was uncommonly charitable to the poor, and liberal in contribution to promote the public happiness. Thus far is fact.

Having been so long and so intimately acquainted with Mr. Richardson, my opinion of his natural temper and disposition may be desired. I therefore in sincerity certify, that I consider him of an open, generous, benevolent, glowing, exquisitely feeling heart, and of a temper naturally sanguine, and habitually inclined to virtue.

NATHANIEL HUSE.

[No. XVIII.]

MR. H. FEARING,

Westford, November 9, 1805.

SIR—I wrote you a few days since, and again I address myself to you as one wishing well to the parish of which you are a member, and a leading character of that, and the town to which you belong. If I am correct in my ideas of your general and moral character and principle as a useful member in society, I have no doubt but you wish to promote order and harmony in the town and parish where you reside in particular (and at large.) To such a man I say, I learn you are endeavouring to settle a minister, and if I am correct, are in favour of Mr. J. Richardson, a man educated and fitted in and near this town. He was courting a very fine young woman here for five or six years, and was considered as promised in marriage; but at once he broke off, and wrote her the

following words, viz. "Think of the subscriber *no more*, and for God's sake forgive me." "Forgive me" what? If he was not faulty, what is there to forgive? For what does he crave forgiveness? This breach is now pending before our Supreme Court at Cambridge. And at present his character here stands such as you would not wish to have as a divine with you. For my own part, I have no personal knowledge of him. Permit me the liberty to say, look before you leap. His conduct to Miss Robinson is here universally condemned by the most respectable people of this town, and from what I can learn, should be sorry to have our republican principles supported by such men. I wish you a good man settled, and a republican in principles; but of a *good moral character*. Politics should never interfere in religious concerns. They are two distinct characters or orders, and ever ought to be kept separate.

I remain

Your obedient servant and friend,

LUTHER LINCOLN.

[No. IX.]

SIR,

Charlestown, December 26, 1805.

As the letters, or "written documents," which you or your friends have in possession, containing charges and reports prejudicial to my moral character, have been publicly read and every way employed to my injury; and as the means of making a full defence have been denied me, I see not how any principle of honour or rectitude can justify the possessors in withholding them longer.

Sir, I again earnestly solicit copies of all those documents, or an opportunity that I or my friends may copy them.

I say, Sir, if they contain the truth, it is not in my power, nor is it in my disposition, to prevent your receiving all the due advantage that can result from them.

I cannot but feel assured that your generosity will cheerfully grant, what, in my humble opinion, justice demands.

With due respect,

Col. NATHAN RICE.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

[No. XX.]

SIR,

Hingham, December 31, 1805.

In answer to your letter requesting me to furnish you with a copy of certain letters, or documents, containing charges and reports prejudicial to your moral character, which you say have been publicly read, and in every way made use of to your injury, and which you observe are in my possession, or that of my friends—it might be sufficient for me to remark, what I did when I saw you at the Miss Barker's, that I was not the proprietor of those documents, none of them having been sent to me—that therefore I had no right to dispose of them.

I think you will have the candour to acquit me of a disposition to deny you the means of making a full defence of your character, after the free discussion I had with you, and communication of those documents to you, in the presence of your friends.

They contained a narrative of certain transactions, and the opinions of particular gentlemen who relate. That you thoroughly understood them, and well knew the persons from whom they came, is very manifest, from the *document* you furnished, which was publicly read, in which you give your statement of all the transactions referred to in them, with such circumstances as you expected no doubt would fully justify your conduct; in which (as I understood it) you do not hesitate to bestow opprobrious

epithets on, but explicitly impeach the veracity of the writers of them. Nor do I recollect in any part of your narrative, any thing that looked like ignorance of the subject matter of which you are accused therein, or of the persons exhibiting the accusations. To them, it was always in your power, and in that of your friends, to apply, and obtain that information which you now request of me. On this knowledge, I say, you proceeded to justify yourself, and that justification it is presumable must have been intended to satisfy those who had doubts of the propriety of your conduct. But *that* was denied them; a copy was refused, even after an offer was made to give a copy of the documents against you. I cannot therefore perceive any ground of complaint of being deprived of information already in your possession, or which you or your friends could have obtained on so easy terms.

How far your statement would have satisfied my mind, had I been indulged with a perusal of it, I cannot say; but I do most candidly say, that the charges contained in those letters, and which appear to be the only things noticed by you, are not the only nor the greatest difficulties with me. There are such evidences of impropriety in your conduct towards Miss Robinson—your denial of being under a promise of marriage to her, *which is stated by Dr. Cummings*, and which seems to be incompatible with truth, as manifested by a certificate or deposition made by the Rev. Mr. Barton, and which is also pretty fully proved by *your own letter to her*, in which you “*beg her to place no more confidence in you, but for God’s sake to forgive you*”—and by *her letter to you of August, 1803*; the very complexion of which would give the lie to such an assertion. For if no promise existed, why the request for forgiveness of her? I say, Sir, these, together with your insinuation that you had a letter from her, in which she gives her full assent to a discontinuance of the connexion, evidently intending thereby to satisfy the minds of people on that head, together with your apparent determination to remain here, notwithstanding the great and serious opposition thereto, and the unhappiness it will inevitably create; so unlike that disposition which we lately experienced in our late worthy Pastor, the small opposition to whom in the parish was a very powerful inducement with him to leave us, and accept the invitation at Cambridge—are difficulties in my mind, among others, I am unable to surmount, and determine my belief in your being an unsuitable man for the sacred office of a minister of the gospel.

With due respect,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

N. RICE.

[No. XXI.]

To Messrs. Nathaniel Hawkins, R. Frothingham, D. Tufts, S. Phipps, J. Teal, J. Frothingham, and T. Thompson, jun.—
Selectmen of the Town of Charlestown.

GENTLEMEN,

You are individually strangers to me, and perhaps always would have remained such, but for the respectability of your offices, and a letter of recommendation to Mr. Joseph Richardson, with an intent to introduce him to the Pastoral charge of the first Parish in Hingham, of which I am an attendant. How far political matters ought, or how far you mean that they should influence you, may at present be passed over. But you must be sensible, for the regular social bonds of society, it is necessary for a good understanding and a mutual confidence to exist among the members thereof; more especially in that which is to carry forward the mutual request and adoration of its constituents to the Supreme Being. Therefore with me you will agree, that a Minister of the Gospel ought to

be a pious, discreet, exemplary man, in order to make a due impression on the hearts of his hearers, as well as to walk prudently between them ; and that when gentlemen use the power of their office to enforce a recommendation of any one for a minister, they ought to be scrupulously cautious how they suddenly take up an opinion, and upon what foundation they support it. Although candour forbids our saying ought against, (nay, may command our well-wishes to an individual) yet the greater good of society demands the first attention. As you, Gentlemen, have, in your recommendation of Mr. Richardson, been careful to add, that "if any illiberal surmises or dishonourable charges have been hinted to the contrary, we believe them groundless," you will give me leave, Gentlemen, to make the following suggestions and queries to yourselves ; viz. Whether you have not heard of a suit against him at Concord, in which he was cast in damage for a breach of promise to a young Lady, which case is now pending at the Supreme Court in Cambridge.

2nd. Whether you know any thing about his communication of the confidential conversation between Dr. Morse and himself, and the circumstances thereof.

3d. The conversation between Mr. Ezra S. Ely and Mr. Richardson, respecting his (Richardson's) going to Dr. Morse to tempt him to say something about his dining with the Republican party in Charlestown ; and whether any or all of you were present at the conversation.

4th. Whether any or all of you were present at the conversation which took place between Messrs. Richardson, Hoar, Rogers, Rockwood and Ely, at Mr. Adams's, after that affair, and know the substance of it in that manner.

5th. Also whether any of you were present at the affray between Mr. Richardson and Dan. Parker, Esq. at the Hotel, which terminated in a fight or something like to one.

6th. And whether you know any thing to the contrary, why the testimony of Dr. Morse, the Rev Titus Theodore Barton of Fitchburg, Dan. Parker, Esq. Samuel Hoar, Esq. Ephraim Rockwood, Esq. Mr. Rogers, Ezra Stiles Ely, William Tuckerman and P. Nichols, should not be received as truth, or either of them.

These questions, I hope, Gentlemen, you will not refuse to indulge me with an answer to in writing, in order to let your past recommendation have its just weight and influence by being communicated to the Parish.*

I am, Gentlemen, with due respect,

Your humble servant,

THOMAS THAXTER.

* This is not only my own, but the request of a number of Gentlemen in Hingham.

[No. XXII.]

To the North Parish in Hingham, assembled in Parish Meeting, on the 9th and 10th days of December, 1805.

The Subscribers, Inhabitants of said Parish, deeply impressed with the importance of having for our Minister a man of pious and exemplary character, whose conduct has been prudent and discreet, and whose life and conversation have been such as become the Gospel ; not only for our own profit as hearers, and for the benefit of the rising generation, but for the cause of religion and morality in the world—do, for ourselves, our posterity, and our Christian brethren in general, enter this our *solemn protest* against the proceedings of this Parish, in calling Mr. Joseph

Richardson to the Pastoral care of this Church and Congregation. Viewing him, as we most sincerely do, to be destitute of those qualifications in point of moral character, which every Minister of the Gospel ought to possess, in order to command the respect, the confidence and attention of his hearers, and to enforce the truths of the Gospel which he may preach—and believing him, as we do, to have been guilty of such violations of faith and confidence, and such indecencies of conduct, as are by no means calculated to adorn the doctrine which he teaches, and which he ought to exemplify ; but, on the contrary, in our minds entirely disqualify him for his profession—we deem it our duty thus publicly and solemnly to bear testimony against this procedure. The facts on which our opinion is grounded, are not merely unauthenticated reports, but written documents, from gentlemen of respectability and undoubted veracity ; who are answerable for what they have asserted, and consequently must be liable to very serious and severe consequences, both in property and reputation, if in their statements they departed from the truth. We will here recapitulate some of the grounds on which we rest our belief, and appeal to every person of candour whether they are not substantiated.

In the first place, we believe Mr. Richardson to have been guilty of a breach of promise, under circumstances of an aggravated nature. The fact on which this belief is grounded, is of such notoriety, that no one pretends to dispute it ; viz.—That he was prosecuted at the Inferiour Court at Concord, where it may fairly be presumed that every evidence was adduced, and every argument used, which could destroy or mitigate the force of the charge ; and that after hearing this evidence, and the arguments of able counsel, a jury of twelve impartial men did, on their oaths, adjudge Mr. Richardson to pay damages to the amount of five hundred dollars.

We believe Mr. Richardson to have been guilty of a breach of confidence, in divulging a confidential communication made to him by Dr. Morse, by his own particular and urgent request, and which was given by the Doctor from motives of friendship to Mr. Richardson ; but which appears to have been obtained by Mr. Richardson for the base and ungenerous purpose of being communicated ; by which some individuals were highly irritated and offended, and which created a serious difficulty between a Minister and some of his people ; with whom the most perfect harmony ought to subsist. Our belief of these circumstances is founded on the testimony of Dr. Morse and Messrs. Hoar and Ely.

From the authority of Messrs. Hoar, Rockwood, and Ely, we believe him to have been guilty of such indecencies of conduct, and to have avowed such principles, as rendered him in the eyes of his acquaintance a disagreeable and dangerous companion : in consequence of which, the gentlemen with whom he boarded unanimously requested him to leave the house.

From the authority of the two last mentioned Gentlemen, we believe his conduct to have been such as to deprive him of the liberty of visiting many respectable families in Charlestown with whom he had before associated.

From the testimony of Messrs. Parker, Tuckerman, Nichols and Gordon, we believe him to have been concerned in an affray with Mr. Parker, in which contest his language was highly irritating and insulting, and his conduct such as would be derogatory to the character of any gentleman, but peculiarly a candidate for the sacred office of a minister of the Gospel ; and on this occasion he manifested a disposition very different from that which is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated ; which is an indispensable requisite in a preacher of Christianity.

Finally, we believe, from a review of the several well-attested statements alluded to, and from the character generally given of Mr. Richardson where he is known, that his settlement in this parish would have a tendency to destroy that social order and harmony for which we have for so many years been distinguished, and to introduce confusion, discord and immorality.

Under these solemn impressions we would again make our remonstrances to the parish, and call on them to review what they have done, and to consider well what they are about to do : to reflect seriously on the importance of the transaction which now engages their attention ; to remember that the consequences of their present decision are not confined to this life, but extend beyond the bounds of time ; and that the future and eternal happiness of the present and succeeding generations is perhaps suspended on the result of this day's proceedings.

B. Lincoln
Samuel Norton
Thomas Gill
Thomas Thaxter
Abner Lincoln
John Beal
Isaiah Cushing
Noah Hearsey
Nathan Rice
Levi Lincoln
Thomas Loring
Loring Bailey
Moses Whiton
Joseph Hammond
Jacob Thaxter
Robert Thaxter
Ephraim Andrews

Martin Lincoln
Thomas Thaxter, jun.
Samuel Hobart
David Lane
Samuel Andrews
Benjamin Jones
Jerom Cushing
John Beal, 3d
Perez Lincoln
Caleb Bates
Quincy Thaxter
Thomas Andrews
Ebed Hearsey
Fairus Leavitt
Daniel Thaxter
Levi Lincoln, jun.
Benjamin Andrews

Warren Burr
Ambrose Lathrop
Nathan Lincoln
Joseph Hammond, jun.
Peter Loring
Ebenezer Gay
Samuel Norton, jun.
Joseph Thaxter
Benjamin Cushing
David Lincoln, jun.
William Cushing
Ensign Barnes
Spiller Fillmore
Fared Lane
Henry Nye
John Barker

[No. XXIII.]

At a Meeting of the First Church in Hingham, holden at the Derby Academy, January 9, 1806—21 members present—

HOB. BENJAMIN LINCOLN Moderator :—

VOTED, unanimously, That the Church consider, the settlement of a gospel minister is one of the most important and interesting transactions which can ever arrest the attention of any Christian society. In the correctness of it, the cause of religion, the well-being of society and the happiness of individuals are deeply involved. In the selection of religious instructors, our pious forefathers were extremely cautious and conscientious. They were firm believers, that the traits of character, which St. Paul described as requisite in a bishop, were absolutely necessary in a Christian minister :—That he should be blameless, as the steward of God ; not self-willed, not soon angry, no striker, not given to filthy lucre ; but a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate ; that he might be able both to exhort and to convince : also, that he should have a good report of them who are without, lest he fall into reproach.

The congregational churches in New-England early adopted the advice of St. Paul, and their strict adherence thereto greatly promoted the cause and interests of religion. Any deviation therefrom is considered dangerous and hostile to Christianity. Under these impressions the Church cannot but view the late conduct of the Parish, in inviting Mr. Joseph Richardson to the pastoral care of this church and congregation, as irregular and improper.

1st. Irregular, because the invitation was given by the Parish without first obtaining or ever requesting the concurrence of the Church, contrary to the uniform practice of the churches in New-England.

2nd. Improper, because there are strong and insuperable objections in the minds of many against Mr. Richardson, on account of his moral character.

3d. Improper, because of the division and great unhappiness which the invitation, if accepted, would occasion in this Church and Society.

4th. Improper, because if the Candidate should be settled under present circumstances, his usefulness, even if he were a good man, would in a great measure be lost, and his conduct in accepting would be totally different from the directions of St. Paul, who said, It is not good to do any thing whereby a brother is offended.

With these views, therefore, the Church do totally disapprove of the conduct of the Parish in choosing and inviting Mr. Joseph Richardson for their pastor, and do hereby enter their solemn protest thereto, under the solemn and awful impressions of future accountability to that Being, from whom no action can be concealed, and to whom no thought nor design of the heart is unknown.

Attest. WILLIAM CUSHING, *Clerk.*

[No. XXIV.]

GENTLEMEN,

Hingham, February 18, 1806.

You are hereby informed that the ecclesiastical council, appointed by the parish and Mr. Joseph Richardson, to investigate his moral character, will sit at the house of Mr. Andrew Seton, in Charlestown, on Tuesday, 25th instant, at ten o'clock, A. M. at which time and place, you, and all others opposed to Mr. Richardson, may have an opportunity to shew cause why he is not a man of good moral character.

To Deacon WILLIAM CUSHING,
and Mr. THOMAS LORING.

THOMAS FEARING,
In behalf of the Parish Committee.

[No. XXV.]

To the Rev. Gentlemen, Dr. Cummings and others, assembled for the purpose of investigating the moral character of Mr. Joseph Richardson.

GENTLEMEN,

I have been notified, as clerk to the First Church of Christ in Hingham, by the chairman of a committee of the parish, that an ecclesiastical council will meet at Charlestown, the 25th instant, to investigate the moral character of Mr. Joseph Richardson, and that myself and any others who are opposed to his settlement in this place as a gospel minister, may have an opportunity of stating our objections.

Having communicated the subject to a number of my brethren of the church, and having reflected on it, I hope with all that seriousness which its importance demands, we were unanimously of opinion, that, as the church have remonstrated to the parish against the calling of Mr. Richardson to the gospel ministry in this place, as they have never been consulted in the invitation of this council, and as the calling of an ecclesiastical council without the concurrence of the church, is unauthorised by the platform, and contrary to the uniform practice of the churches of New-England, that therefore any statements by the church, of our objections to Mr. Richardson, would be recognising the authority of the council, and sanctioning an innovation dangerous to the rights of the church, and the general interests of religion.

I feel it my duty, therefore, as an individual interested in the maintenance of that good order, decorum and propriety, for which our pious ancestors were so eminently distinguished, and which is an essential pil-

lar of Morality and Religion—for myself, and in behalf of my Brethren of the church, to remonstrate against the irregular proceeding of the parish in calling this council, and to disavow the jurisdiction of the council in the subject referred to them, however confident we may be in the wisdom and integrity of the gentlemen who compose it.

With due respect, Gentlemen,

I am your obedient servant,

WILLIAM CUSHING,

Clerk of the First Church of Christ in Hingham.

We, the undersigned members of the first Church of Christ in Hingham, do approve and agree to the foregoing remonstrance.

Joseph Thaxter	} Deacons.	Isaiah Cushing	Robert Thaxter
Benj. Cushing		Samuel Norton	Fairus Leavitt
William Cushing		Noah Hearsey	John Beal
David Lincoln, jr.		Ebed Hearsey	Nathan Lincoln
B. Lincoln		David Lincoln	Caleb Thaxter
Levi Lincoln		Abner Lincoln	Nathan Rice
Thomas Gill		Benjamin Jones	

We, the undersigned, inhabitants of the First Parish in Hingham, but not members of the church, considering ourselves under the jurisdiction of the church in ecclesiastical affairs, do approve and agree to the foregoing remonstrance.

Thomas Loring	David Lane	John Beal, 3d.
Loring Bailey	Henry Nye	Martin Lincoln
Joseph Hammond	Perez Lincoln	Benjamin Barnes
Thomas Thaxter	Ferom Cushing	George Barnes
Jacob Thaxter	Fared Lane	Moses Whiton
John Barker	Thomas Andrews	Nathaniel Wilder
Ensign Barnes	Samuel Norton, jun.	Daniel Thaxter
Jacob Williams	Henry Thaxter	Spiller Fillmore
Quincy Thaxter	Samuel Hobart	Eben. Gay
Warren Burr	Peter Hearsey	Levi Lincoln, jun.
Thomas Thaxter, jun.	Peter Hearsey, jun.	Caleb Bates
Ephraim Andrews	Joseph Blake	Seth Stodder
Samuel Andrews	Joseph Hammond, jun.	Canterbury Barnes
Peter Loring	Benjamin Andrews	Elijah Whiton, 3d.

[No. XXVI.]

The Parish having this day voted to engage Mr. Joseph Richardson to reside among them as a public teacher of religion, until he shall be regularly settled as a gospel minister :—

We, whose names are underwritten, having borne testimony or voted against that measure, do hereby declare that we cannot conscientiously and conveniently attend upon the instructions of said Joseph, for the following reasons, viz.—

1st. Because objections to the moral character of the said Joseph have been made, of which ample evidence exists, and which we fully believe.

2nd. Because the advocates of said Joseph in this parish have rejected our proposition to convene an ecclesiastical council, mutually to be chosen by the said Joseph and his advocates on the one part, and his opponents on the other, to settle all matters in controversy relative to the said Joseph, pursuant to the recommendation of the late convention of ministers at Charlestown, chosen by themselves.

3d. Because we are confirmed in the truth and propriety of our objections to the said Joseph by the conduct of his advocates, in rejecting the only equitable means of fairly determining upon the subject in controversy, and are constrained to believe their refusal arises from an apprehen-

sion that the result of such an investigation would be unfavourable to their wishes.

We do therefore solemnly protest against the introduction of the said Joseph among us, as a measure of deleterious effect, tending to consequences hazardous, if not fatal, to domestic peace and harmony in this society.

Under these impressions, and the sanction of the constitution, we determine not to contribute towards the support of the said Joseph, but to provide a public teacher for ourselves during the time the said Joseph shall be employed as aforesaid.

To this Protest and Declaration we wish all due publicity to be given, and desire the same may be entered on the parish records as an evidence of our intentions here expressed.

Hingham. March 8, 1806.

[Signed by sixty-two males, and twenty females who pay taxes.]

[No. XXVII.]

Hingham, April 4, 1806.

To Gen. BENJAMIN LINCOLN and others, protestors against the proceedings of the North Parish in Hingham, in calling Joseph Richardson to the pastoral care of the Church and Congregation of said Parish,

As the allegations, contained in your "*solemn protest*," against my moral character, remain still unsupported by proper evidence, before any impartial tribunal chosen by the parties concerned; I now am authorised, by the consent of my friends, to make you this proposition of a method of adjusting all differences respecting my moral character.

That a reference, consisting of five gospel ministers, be chosen in the following manner, and with the following restrictions, viz.—

1. That the parties agree in choosing a moderator.
2. That the others be chosen, two by the opposers, and two by the friends.
3. That no other question be submitted to the consideration of said reference than this:—Whether my *moral character* be found by investigation really such as to disqualify me, or render me an unsuitable person, for the office of a gospel minister.

4. That the parties obligate themselves to abide by the result of said reference. Should the result determine my moral character to be such as disqualifies me for the office of a gospel minister, then are my friends obligated to relinquish me. If on the other hand the reference determine my moral character and conduct in life to be such as not to disqualify me for the office aforesaid, then are all my opposers bound to relinquish all opposition to my settlement as the gospel minister of the North Parish in Hingham.

5. That if either of the parties decline producing their evidence, it shall be considered as entirely giving up the cause of that party.

To Gen. B. LINCOLN.

SIR—Be pleased to communicate the within written proposition to the aforementioned protestors, and favour me with information of their resolutions on the subject.

Gen. B. LINCOLN.

With due respect,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

[No. XXVIII.]

Hingham, April 15, 1806.

SIR,

Your letter of the 4th instant, addressed to Gen. Lincoln and others, containing overtures for the settlement of existing difficulties in this parish, has been attentively considered, and has had all the reflection bestowed on it which its importance demanded.

Your opposers have ever been anxious to restore the peace and harmony of the parish, and to settle all differences in a just, honourable and equitable manner, and embrace, with pleasure, this opportunity to renew the assurance of these their wishes. The undersigned are instructed to inform you, that they are entirely willing to comply with the recommendation of the ministers who some time since assembled at Charlestown at the request of yourself and friends, in calling a regular ecclesiastical council, to assemble in the meeting-house in this parish, for the purposes expressed by them; but, as it appears to be the particular wish of yourself and friends, that a *reference*, consisting of ordained ministers of the gospel, should be substituted instead of a *council*, they agree thereto, on condition that it consist of a suitable number, equally chosen by the parties, to assemble at the place and for the purposes aforesaid.

Should the foregoing principles meet your wishes, the parties may hereafter agree on the mode of carrying the same into effect.

With due consideration,

N. RICE,	} Committee.
THOMAS LORING,	
ABNER LINCOLN,	
ROBERT THAXTER,	
JEROM CUSHING,	}

[No. XXIX.]

Charlestown, February 25, 1806.

The undersigned ministers, being invited by the North Parish in Hingham, and by Mr. Joseph Richardson, to investigate his moral character, having read a remonstrance of the dissatisfied people in said Hingham, but no persons appearing to support said allegations, we are utterly unable to form any judgment upon the subject; and are constrained to recommend it to Mr. Richardson and the people in Hingham, as the only regular expedient for settling their differences, to convene a mutual ecclesiastical council to judge and decide upon all matters of dispute among them relative to Mr. Richardson.

A true copy of the result of said ministers.

Attest. EDMUND FOSTER.

[No. XXX.]

SIR, *Hingham, March 15, 1806.*

Having considered the proposition brought forward yesterday at the parish meeting by Col. Rice, with that seriousness which the importance of the subject requires, respecting the opposers of Mr. Richardson assembling in our meeting-house with another minister; we are induced to say that it is not only our own, but it is the opinion of the present supporters of Mr. Richardson, that such a measure would lead to great confusion, and be the means of much disturbance on the Lord's day. We therefore, at the request of a number of the inhabitants of said parish, feel it our duty to deny, and do forbid the opening of the meeting-house before the usual time, and continuing it open after the usual time, on Sunday.

TO JACOB THAXTER,	} Committee of the North Parish.
<i>Sexton.</i>	
SOLOMON JONES,	}
JEDEDIAH LINCOLN,	
JOHN LEAVITT,	

[No. XXXI.]

Hingham, April 16, 1806.

Messrs. Nathan Rice, Thomas Loring, Abner Lincoln, Robert Thaxter, and Jerom Cushing, a Committee.

GENTLEMEN—Your letter of the 15th instant is received. It is the opinion of a number of my friends, and without hesitation my own, that

it is improper for us to make any *reply* to your propositions, until you favour us with a positive determination whether you will or will not adopt our proposition. Be pleased, Gentlemen, without delay, to favour me with a decision.

Respectfully, yours,

To the COMMITTEE.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

[No. XXXII.]

SIR,

Hingham, April 19, 1806.

In reply to yours of the 16th instant, we would observe, that our communication of the 15th was predicated on the recommendation of the ministers who assembled at Charlestown at the particular request of you and your friends, where they declare it to be the only regular expedient for settling our differences, and which is perfectly consonant with our own sentiments. No reasons have since occurred to induce us to alter our opinion: we would now only say, that we decidedly adhere to the principles contained in the communication. You, Sir, can judge whether they are conformable to those propositions offered by you.

With due consideration, &c.

By order of the Committee,

To Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

N. RICE.

[No. XXXIII.]

We the subscribers, a committee duly appointed at a legal meeting* of the North Parish in Hingham to contract with Mr. Joseph Richardson as the public teacher of religion in said parish, hereby certify, that we have attended that duty by presenting him an attested copy of the votes of said parish, and have received his answer of compliance with the conditions of the same.

Hingham, March 13, 1806.

THOMAS FEARING,	} Committee.
JACOB LEAVITT,	
HAWKES FEARING,	
SETH LINCOLN,	
JOHN MARSH,	
LABAN HEARSEY,	

* *This was a constitutional meeting, held March 8, 1806.*

[No. XXXIV.]

To Messrs. Thomas Fearing, Jacob Leavitt, Hawkes Fearing, Seth Lincoln, John Marsh, Ezra Lincoln, and Laban Hearsey.

GENTLEMEN,

Being presented by your hands an attested copy of the votes passed at a legal meeting of the inhabitants of the said parish in Hingham, on Saturday the eighth day of March, 1806, authorising you, Gentlemen, as a committee of said parish, to contract with me as the public teacher of religion in the said parish; I hereby certify a free acceptance of the appointment as the public teacher of religion in the said parish, and a firm obligation to comply with all the conditions stated in said votes, or referred to as stated in the invitation previously presented to me to settle as a gospel minister of said parish. This I do, Gentlemen, not without a solemn sense of responsibility to the important trust reposed in me to promote the present and future well-being of this people, with a humble reliance on the support and direction of that Being to whose service I thus devote my life, and to whom I trust we unite our prayer, that our imperfect endeavours to advance his cause, may be crowned with abundant success.

Gentlemen, with affectionate regard,

Yours,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

[No. XXXV.]

TO WHOM IT CONCERNS.

We the subscribers certify, that we are acquainted with Miss Betsy Robinson, of Westford, that she has ever sustained a strictly moral and virtuous reputation; and, as far as our knowledge extends, while receiving the attention of Mr. Joseph Richardson, never permitted the address of any other person.

Signed by

Nov. 6, 1805.

Rev. CALEB BLAKE,

Dr. CHARLES PROCTER,

ZACC. WRIGHT, Esq.

} *Her*
Neighbours.

And by

Benjamin Osgood, Esq. John Abbot, Esq. Luther Lincoln, Samuel Fletcher, Abijah Reed, Timothy Prescott, Zaccheus Reed.—Samuel Reed, jun. Jeremiah Hildreth, Isaiah Prescott—Selectmen.

[No. XXXVI.]

This is to certify that I, Titus Theodore Barton, of Fitchburg, had, when I lived at Tewksbury, some knowledge of the attention which Mr. Joseph Richardson paid to Miss Betsy Robinson, of Westford. The said Joseph had put himself under my tuition to fit for college. After he had been with me perhaps a year, I was informed that he was attending to Miss Robinson, whereupon, according to the best of my recollection, I conversed with and informed him of the impropriety of attending to two so important objects as courting a wife and obtaining an education at the same time, and advised him to suspend the courtship until after he had completed his education. In reply to my reasoning, according to the best of my recollection, the said Joseph represented to me that he had advanced in the courtship too far to go back. If I do not greatly misremember, what he said made this impression on my mind, that he viewed himself under obligations to the said Betsy, as binding as could precede marriage; whereupon I gave up a rule with scholars, as it respected said Joseph, which I never departed from in any other case; viz. that young gentlemen, while under my tuition, should pay no particular attention to young ladies; and conducted toward him differently in that respect, from what I did toward other scholars. He frequently had my horse and chaise to visit her, and wait on her to visit his and her relations.

[No. XXXVII.]

SIR,

Westford, June, 1803.

I have received a letter from your hand that disturbs me exceedingly, for I know not, nor I cannot imagine, the cause of your so doing. It contained these words; "Friend, place no more confidence in the subscriber, but for God's sake forgive him!!!"

Is it possible it came from you, whom I thought, and ever have had the greatest reason to believe, my true and loyal friend? Can it be possible you wish to dissolve connection with me? I cannot believe it, as it is what I never thought of. If you had thought or wished for any such thing, so much honour as you always professed, I think you must have come and told me yourself, and have given me the reasons for such unexpected disappointment—I should not think of you as I now do, perhaps, a cruel, unmerciful man. Had you come and wished for me to release you, and give up the idea of considering you any longer as a companion, and given me sufficient reasons for your so doing, I think it likely we might have agreed to have parted in peace and content, for I hope I shall never wish to connect myself with the person that dislikes me. But what your reasons are I know not, therefore I cannot give up the thoughts of seeing you again, and knowing your reasons for so doing. Believe me, friend, I shall feel very anxious and uneasy until I see you. Believe me your true but much disturbed friend,

BETSY ROBINSON.

Middlesex, ss. June 28, 1806.

Then the above named Betsy Robinson appeared and made oath, that the foregoing letter is a true copy of a letter sent by her to Joseph Richardson, according to her best recollection; and that no separation was ever proposed or mentioned by her before the letter written to her above referred to, in the words "Friend, place no more confidence in the subscriber, but for God's sake forgive him."

Before JOHN ABBOT, *Justice of the Peace.*
A true copy from the original.

[No. XXXVIII.]

Westford, August, 1803.

Well, Mr. External Saint, as you once used to appear, but now Internal Elf; you now have put in practice what I always heard you condemn. People say you can now wait on your sweetheart to balls, and spend evenings where there is music and dancing. I have heard you say any person that practised such things was going immediately to hell. You say the person whom you now are partial to, does not approve of such conduct. Indeed I presume she does not. *You know* that there is not a person of respectability that would justify it. It is said, that you lie to every one who says any thing to you about your misconduct, and are deceitful beyond expression. If you were not void of justice and feeling, I should think you would tremble at the precipice on which you stand, if what I have lately heard you have said is true; as I have not the least doubt but it is, concerning your not breaking any promises, which you know is false. I think you are one of the most unrighteous wretches that ever had an existence in a Christian land. You once professed a great deal of honour and principle; but you have shewn none in your late treatment to me. I think you might have come and told me your intentions yourself, and not sent me that little short scrawl of an imposition that you did. You are now become one of the worst of all the human species. Do you expect any thing better than the curses of God to follow you, after such conduct? Any person that has so repeatedly sworn, and solemnly promised to perform any vow, of whatever nature, as you have, and withal wished the curses of God to follow them if they did not perform to the utmost of their ability, must, if they voluntarily break their promises, expect the curses of God to follow them. This is just yours, exactly your case, and what you have done. You knew not what would be the result of such an unexpected overturn. Why, you knew not but it would prove fatal to me, as well as to others, that have been treated in like manner. You knew not but it would deprive me of life, or happiness. Therefore you are as bad as a murderer to disappoint me in such manner. I hear you promise yourself great happiness in the new connection you are forming; however, you may be disappointed as well as I. Your happiness is not certain. Any person that has publicly made a profession of the most serious importance, to conduct in such an ungrateful manner as you have done, I think will meet with his disagreeables. If you appear openly to the world to flourish and be happy, I think you will have your late conduct to haunt your mind, that will make you unhappy. You know that you have repeatedly said, that you felt yourself as sincerely and as strongly engaged, as ever any man could, and that, if you had been married for years, you could not feel more sincerely engaged than you did. And you know that you have repeatedly sworn never to leave me nor forsake me through life; but in all situations to abide by me till *Death* should part us: and now you have broken all those promises, without giving me the least reason for so doing. You are one of the most inhuman wretches that ever lived. Such treatment is too

much to endure from one whom I thought my friend. You are crueler than the grave. I hope your conduct will be a means of your feeling unhappy. I wish it might turn on your own head, that you may feel it sensibly. You are worse than a wolf in sheep's clothing, and full of deceit as an evil spirit. However, I hope you will, for I think you have it yet to do, that is, make your peace with God before you die; but I care little for your happiness in this life, for you know your conduct has been cruel to her that was your friend.*

To Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

BETSY ROBINSON.

Middlesex, ss. June 28, 1806.

Then the aforementioned Betsy Robinson appeared, and made oath that the foregoing letter is a true copy of a letter by her sent to Joseph Richardson, according to her best recollection.

Before JOHN ABBOT, *Justice of the Peace.*

A true copy from the original.

* *This and the foregoing letter were taken from the original copies of those sent in consequence of his—"Friend, put no more confidence in the subscriber, &c."*

[No. XXXIX.]

I, JOHN ROBINSON, of Westford, in the County of Middlesex, do depose and say, that about the first of June, 1803, after my sister Betsy Robinson had received from Joseph Richardson a very short letter, I went to see said Richardson, and asked him what he meant by said letter; he said he did not know, he had gotten into a deep study, into a long pasture, and did not know how to get out of it. Further I asked him if it was any thing my sister Betsey had done or said, or any thing he had heard about her: he replied it was not, that he liked her as well as he ever did, and had reason to respect her. I then remarked to said Richardson, You then never intended to marry her, but keep her along in suspense till you had gotten through college, and then leave her: he replied, it was no such thing; he did intend to marry her, and it was but a short time since he had thoughts of leaving her. I then said, You must know it is undoing her. He said, It is undoing myself. I requested him to call and see my sister: he said it could be of no consequence. I told him I thought it would, and urged him so much, he gave me to understand he would. Said Richardson did not come, and in about one fortnight I went to see him again, and said to him, You have not made it in your way to call yet. He said, No, I have not, for it can be of no consequence. I told him it would really be of consequence, for my sister Betsy wished to see him for a few minutes, to know the meaning of such treatment. I then asked him if he had been at home lately. He said, No, his father-in-law had called to see him, and appeared to be anxious about something, and requested him to go home, for his mother wished to see him very much. I then asked him if he had been home since his father called on him: he said, No, he dared not go, for he heard that his friends at Tewksbury had said he was as much worse than the devil, as the devil was worse than a common good Christian. And he was afraid if he went home they would catch him and tar and feather him.

JOHN ROBINSON.

Middlesex, ss. June 28, 1806.

Then the abovenamed John Robinson made oath that the above facts subscribed are true, according to his best recollection.

Before JOHN ABBOT, *Justice of the Peace.*

A true copy from the original.

[No. XL.]

Mr. Richardson, in what he calls his letter of defence, expresses himself to the following effect :—As it respects the affair with Dr. Morse, which has led to measures calculated both to injure his character, and deprive him even of the means to get his bread, he went to the Doctor, not for advice, but, as he was a clergyman of the town, merely as a compliment; that Dr. Morse spoke to him without enjoining confidence; that he (the Doctor) said Mr. Jefferson was an infidel, and his supporters men generally void of principle: that the republican party in Charlestown were generally unprincipled, weak, and ignorant men: and that Mr. Richardson would be sorry for joining them: that two of the trustees in particular were vile, wicked and unprincipled men: that what Mr. Ely had written respecting his going to Dr. Morse was false: that Ely had frequently said the republicans were generally knaves and dupes, of the former of which Mr. Richardson was one, and frequently provoked him with such language: that Mr. Parker visited a scandalous house in Boston, and when he (Richardson) was passing without, mentioned his being a young clergyman in Charlestown, thereby making it to appear to persons of ill fame, that he visited such houses or places: that Mr. Parker would frequently be mentioning these matters, particularly at table, and before strangers, after he had been repeatedly requested not to: that the subject of dispute betwixt himself and Parker arose from Parker's applying the character of a certain Quaker to him, which was without foundation, for which he gave him the *lie*, and called him puppy, and left the table: that when he went out to school, Mr. Parker desired an explanation, and on his refusing to retract what he had before said, Parker struck him with a little stick, on which he took Parker by the collar and held him. That the statement of the affair made by Tuckerman, is all false, scandalous, and beneath contempt: that as to Messrs. Rockwood's and Hoar's, it is no more then that he has enemies who calumniate his character; that although he treated them with respect whilst boarding together, they were dissatisfied, which induced him to leave the house; after which, the landlord and wife expressed to him their satisfaction of his conduct whilst boarding there, and their regret at his leaving leaving them; and the gentlemen's sorrow for their conduct towards him, and requested for him to return back again; but as he had engaged another place, he did not, and offered that as the reason.

* * The reader is requested carefully to compare this with the story related by Mr. Charles Lincoln, and the one told to Mr. Jotham Lincoln, jun. on Mr. Richardson's coming to town, after the matter had been brought up in the parish meeting, October 14, 1805. The same relation he makes in this defence with regard to his leaving Mr. Adams's house, Mr. Charles Lincoln told with his first tale, and said he had it from Mr. Richardson, and connected it with Mr. Parker's affray, so as to lead some to think they both happened at one and the same house, and that those gentlemen were displeased with Mr. Richardson merely for being a clergyman.

[No. XLI.]

I hereby certify, that Mr. Joseph Richardson boarded at my house some time in the year 1804, and that his general conduct toward myself and family was perfectly satisfactory to me; but that, in consequence of his declaring it to be a principle with him in certain instances to divulge communications of a confidential nature, and his having practised upon that principle in an affair relating to the Rev. Dr. Morse, several gentlemen who boarded with me at the same time passed a unanimous vote to exclude Mr. Richardson from their society, and he accordingly left the house. And whereas it has been reported that the gentlemen afterwards

expressed a wish for the return of Mr. Richardson, I also certify, that I never informed Mr. Richardson that the said gentlemen wished for his return under existing circumstances; and am fully persuaded that his return would have been the signal for them to change their lodgings.

Charlestown, June 27, 1806.

A. ADAMS.

I further certify, that I have no idea that the aforesaid gentlemen ever requested the return of Mr. Richardson under any circumstances whatever; but think it probable that suitable apologies on his part might have produced a reconciliation.

A. ADAMS.

Suffolk, ss. June 30, 1806.

Then personally appeared A. ADAMS, within named, and made solemn oath to the truth of the declarations by him subscribed,

Before me, JOHN HEARD, JUN. *Jus. Peace.*

A true copy from the original.

[No. XLII.]

Billerica, June 22, 1806.

GENTLEMEN and FELLOW-CHRISTIANS,

I have received your letter, in behalf of the North Church in Hingham, requesting my attendance with a delegate from the church of which I am pastor, on Wednesday, July 2, 1806, to assist in the ordination of a gospel minister.

It is painful to my feelings to inform you, that, conceiving it to be inconsistent with a due regard to myself, in my advanced stage of life, to comply with your request, I am obliged to decline it. I have fallen into the eve of life, and very sensibly feel the decay of health and vigour, and the debilities of old age, which cannot but render the service, which you request, very burdensome and fatiguing; especially considering the heat of the season, and the distance of Hingham from Billerica, and more especially the perplexity of the business; which, from the circumstances of your affairs, I suppose must come before the council prior to the ordination, which will necessarily require too close and lengthy attention for the present state of my mind and faculties. For these and some other reasons that might be mentioned, which however do not respect Mr. Richardson, but concern only myself, I am obliged to excuse myself from the service you request.

I communicated your letter to the Church, who, supposing, as I should decline attending for the reasons aforesaid, it would answer no good purpose to send a delegate, thought it best not to come to a choice, and accordingly dismissed the business. My letters respecting Mr. Richardson, to Dr. Morse and others, of which you have copies, sufficiently express the favourable ideas I entertained concerning him when he left Billerica. They show that his character then stood fair in my view; and although it has since been impeached by heavy charges, contained in a remonstrance or protest of his opposers in Hingham; yet, while he is ready to submit to a thorough investigation, and wishes for a fair trial before an impartial tribunal, but cannot obtain it, let common sense decide, whether those unsupported criminations ought to be considered as evidence that he has forfeited his former reputation.

I most heartily wish you, and your pastor elect, divine guidance and direction; and devoutly pray, that when the contemplated sacred connexion between him and you shall be formed, it may produce an happy source of mutual blessings and comforts, till Providence shall dissolve the important tie.

Accept, Brethren,

My respectful consideration.

HENRY CUMMINGS.

Messrs. Thomas Fearing, Isaac Cushing & Seth Lincoln.

[No. XLIII.]

DEAR SIR,

Billerica, August 12, 1806.

Your committee, I presume, have received my letter in answer to theirs of the 26th of June last; in which I assigned reasons of sufficient weight in my mind, for my not appearing on the council called to ordain Mr. Richardson.

Yours of the 7th instant is now before me, in which you state that one of the ordaining council observed, that "I had now given Mr. Richardson a recommendation, and then read an extract from my letter, to the following purpose: 'What shall we think of charges alleged against Mr. Richardson, when he has earnestly endeavoured and desired to have an impartial investigating council, but could never obtain it.' I will give you the whole paragraph in my letter to the committee of the Church, (as they styled themselves) to which, I suppose, the gentleman must have referred; and then you may judge for yourself, whether it can bear the construction he was pleased to put upon it.

"My letters respecting Mr. Richardson to Dr. Morse and others, of which you have copies, sufficiently express the favourable ideas I entertained concerning him, when he left Billerica. They show that his character then stood fair in my view; and though it has since been impeached by heavy charges, contained in the remonstrance or protest of his opposers in Hingham; yet, while he is ready to submit to a thorough investigation, and wishes for a fair trial before an impartial tribunal, but cannot obtain it, let common sense decide, whether those unsupported criminations ought to be considered sufficient evidence that he has forfeited his former reputation."

In what part of this paragraph do you find any other recommendation of Mr. Richardson, than that he left Billerica with a fair character, in my view? As to reports that have since been circulated to his disadvantage, and the things alleged against him in your remonstrance, it has been my uniform advice, to refer them to the judgment and decision of a council, or of any other tribunal; in the choice of which, the parties concerned should have an equal voice. If I have rightly understood Mr. Richardson, he has been ready and desirous to submit to a thorough investigation and trial, but could not succeed according to his wishes.—Proceeding on this supposition, I say, "let common sense decide &c." I do not assert positively, as my decided opinion, that Mr. Richardson had, in fact, *been ready, &c.* My language is obviously hypothetical; as if, instead of the words "*while he is ready,*" I had said, *supposing he is ready, or, so long as he remains ready, &c.* The extract which you mention, is neither in my words nor expressive of my meaning.

I understood there had been proposals for a council or tribunal, mutually chosen; but whether Mr. Richardson, or his opposers, or adherents, have defeated such proposals, by clogging them with unreasonable preliminaries, as a condition of submitting the matters aforesaid, is best known to themselves. The consequences of the proceedings and result of the ordaining council, time will discover. With my best wishes for your personal happiness, and the peace and welfare of the good people in Hingham, and with the most respectful consideration,

I am, Sir,

Your sincere friend,

MR. A. LINCOLN.

HENRY CUMMINGS.

[No. XLIV.]

MISS BETSY,

Having a convenient opportunity, I improve this time in writing these few lines; and as *I can take more pleasure than in attending on balls, or in*

being in any person's company, I think it more advantageous. Although I lately had the pleasure of seeing you, yet I think it may be an advantage to write to one another, if agreeable; and I shall be glad to hear from you oftener than I can see you. I had rather devote my time to that purpose, than attend to any amusement whatever. I did lately attempt to spend an evening where there was music and dancing, but I could not take any satisfaction in it, and left the company immediately. Those are welcome to it, who wish to enjoy it. I find it is vain, by experience; and every candid mind must acknowledge it to be so. I wish not to flatter any person, I only wish to have the matter weighed in the minds of those who practise it. I hope you will not be offended at my writing in this manner, for I hope it is from a true charitable disposition, and I hope you will receive these lines from me as a token of friendship, for I have nothing worse in view than to promote the happiness of a person in high estimation. Thus I inform you, hoping you are in good health, as I am. I hope you will soon write to me, as I shall be happy in writing to you. I shall improve the first opportunity to visit you. I shall come with Mr. and Mrs. Wood, if not disappointed; yet it is uncertain, as we know not what may happen. I hope I can put my trust in the hand of a just God, therefore I subscribe myself,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

Superscribed, Miss BETSY ROBINSON, *Westford.*

Tewksbury, December 3, 1797.

A true copy from the original.

[No. XLV.]

BENIGN FRIEND,

Hanover, September 22, 1798.

I now engage my attention to write the ties of permanent friendship, as I trust I may with immediate confidence. I trust you are well, as when I saw you, which is not long since. I am now in an agreeable situation. Although gained with some fatigue, my journey was very good in some instances; such as a prospect of a new part of the world. To view this extensive orb of the world, covered with lofty hills, adorned with verdant groves; the valleys veil'd; the river's cascades with sweeping torrents, all fill the mind with ideas sublime—raise a thought which transcends many delusive appearances, when we contemplate they were formed by the pure hand of a perfect God. I am now in good health since I arrived. I have also passed examination, and found it to be very favourable; although I was exceedingly pressed with timidity. Friday morning I arrived, Saturday we were invited to breakfast with one of the professors; then examined and invited to see the president; who, with great affability, offered his best services. Thus I conclude, with respect,

Your ceaseless friend,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

N. B. Be pleased to give my love to Mr. and Mrs. Wood.

Superscribed, Miss BETSY ROBINSON, *Tewksbury.*

A true copy from the original.

[No. XLVI.]

CONGENIAL FRIEND,

Dartmouth College, July, 1806.

Notwithstanding I am surrounded with business which is of importance and agreeable, yet I can, with less difficulty than what my friends appear to labour under, divert my attention with pleasure to them, and employ many agreeable moments in reflection.

The sources of all our ideas are sensation and reflection; but we may perceive and reflect all our days, and by concealing the exercises of our minds, nobody become either happier or wiser; and I do not conceive that we ourselves are: for a great part of human happiness consists in a

reciprocal intercourse among friends. *Not that I am fond of an insipid fondness ; but the expressions of a lively and genuine soul.*

Were my mind as much confined as is my body, I should be an unhappy wretch indeed ; but it soars aloft on the pinions of imagination, and contemplates not only the glories of this world, but a fairer world. However, perhaps I enjoy health superiour to almost any, and doubtless superior to some, which blessing I know not how to prize. I trust you do ; but I hope your mind is tranquil, and enjoys a certain serenity which is not derived from any temporal contemplations. Upon the whole, I must confess that I am happier here, than among my relations, being more secluded from all intercourse, except with a few particular intimates, whose company is not only agreeable, but edifying ; whereas, when I am at home, I naturally fall into different kind of company, and old habits, of which I wish to be entirely divested ; such as a night-gathering of my mates, and some insignificant plays, which are neither calculated to improve the mind, nor afford the least matter of happy reflection. Under present circumstances, I am much happiest in a solitary life. The situation of my brother made me more unhappy at home than I am here, as my mind is more employed about other things ; but I can sympathise with my parents ; I know what their feelings must be. Not but that I have as high a value for my friends as ever I had. *My friend, your welfare is nearest my heart. Though no person is possessed of a spirit of more general philanthropy, yet no person's affections centre more immediately in one person.* However, lest I shall give reasons for your thinking me an impostor, I forbear.

The young man who was sick of a fever, survived ; but the young man in a consumption is at the last extremity, on the verge of eternity. It does not seem to be sickly with any contagion ; but a number are exercised with consumptive complaints.

Please to give my compliments to every inquiring friend. Favour me with a letter to ~~confirm~~ my happiness. Be faithful to yourself, as well as others, and I will remain also faithful.

MISS B. ROBINSON.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

Superscribed, Miss BETSY ROBINSON, Tewksbury.

By the politeness of ?

Mr. BLOOD. }

Copy from the original.

[There were a number more of letters to the same purpose, which it is needless to insert here.]

[No. XLVII.]

FRIEND,

Billerica, May 21, 1803.

Place no more confidence in the subscriber, but for God's sake forgive him !!!

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

MISS B. ROBINSON.

Superscribed, Miss BETSY ROBINSON, Westford.

Copy from the original.

[No. XLVIII.]

Charlestown, September 24, 1804.

Well, I hope you are gratified with your revenge, having done all in your power to ruin me. You have published your own weakness to the world, and gained no equivalent for the sacrifice you have made. Still the worst is your own in revenge. Not a motion has been made on my part to injure you. Scarcely have I been faithful in self-defence ; for I had too high an opinion of your good sense to suppose you could so much mistake your credit and happiness. Therefore I have not produced your

last letters. I have summoned no evidence of your conversation, which has been sufficient to defeat your plan. When the verdict was to be given by a jury, two of whom belonged to Westford, I objected not; and when one of your own evidences testified of your having received attentions from a man at Washington, who went so far as to offer you marriage, still no exertion was made on my part to magnify your folly.

At last you obtained judgment against me; which I think will never be satisfied according to your expectations.

Since you have proceeded so far in the offensive war, you cannot esteem me dishonourable if I exert my strength in the defensive. This I presume I shall do to the utmost of my power. I will see what virtue there is in some of your letters. We will see whether this expression has no meaning: "I require nothing of you but to call, as I think you can do no less, and give me a reason for your conduct." "To see you a few minutes is all I ask." I believe you have said, "If he had only called and given his reasons for leaving me, it is all I want of the dirty villain."

I do not wish to contend with you, for a victory in my own favour in a case of this nature would be an inglorious conquest. If after all you should get your cause at the Supreme Court, which I will not warrant, I shall answer all your pretended obligations in thirty days, according to the best desires of my heart, and shall rejoice to be freed at any rate from *a revengeful woman*.

I am willing to be generous with regard to cost, which has occurred to this time, so far as is in my power; but all ideas of any penalty I despise, and will therefore perish before I will yield to an unjust claim.

Content as much as you please, the worst fruit of contention will still be your own.

I never have hated you, nor do I wish to hate you, but I fear you will force me to the exercise of that base passion. I am,

MISS BETSY ROBINSON.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

Superscribed, Miss BETSY ROBINSON, *Westford*.

A true copy from the original.

[No. XLIX.]

Gen. BENJAMIN LINCOLN.

Hingham, June 27, 1806.

SIR—Your name is at the head of many others, pledged to support several highly coloured allegations prejudicial to my character, contained in a protest against the proceedings of the inhabitants of the North Parish in Hingham in calling me to settle as their gospel minister.

On Tuesday the first day of July next a council will convene in Hingham at the house of Mr. Hawkes Fearing. Before that council I am prepared to meet my accusers face to face, and to be judged concerning the charges you alledge against me.

Sir, I call on *you* and the other protestors to produce your evidences in support of these charges. Sir, I appeal to the tribunal of your own conscience, whether principles of uprightness, of integrity and honour, do not most solemnly demand that you support those charges, wounding to my name, or suffer me to obtain the justice of an acquittal.

With due respect,

Gen. B. LINCOLN.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

[No. L.]

[*The following is an extract from a report of the proceedings of the council for Mr. Richardson's ordination, &c. made to the opposition, by their committee appointed to represent them before that council.*]

"Mr. Adams, from Acton, states, that he was in company with Mr. Richardson at Concord a few months before he came to preach in this

place :—that Mr. R. then expressed himself to this effect—that he had quitted preaching because he despised the clergy and the profession, and appeared to wish the company to understand that he was ashamed of ever having had any connexion with the clerical order.—Mr. R. said he did not *recollect* ever to have said any such thing, or even to have seen Mr. Adams before, and wished him to state the place and circumstances when this declaration was made. Mr. A. accordingly stated the place, circumstances, and persons present, all which Mr. R. remembered, but said it was a new charge, which he was not prepared to answer, but had he known it in season he could have produced the persons who were present.

[No. LI.]

Minutes of an Ecclesiastical Council convened at Hingham, Tuesday, July 1, 1806, in consequence of letters missive from "the aggrieved members, being about one half, of the First Church of Christ in Hingham."

The following churches attended by their pastors and delegates, viz.

That in the West Parish in Bridgewater ; Rev. John Reed D D. pastor.—That in the First Parish of Roxbury ; Rev. Eliphalet Porter, pastor, Dea. Joshua Felton, delegate.—That in Duxbury, Rev. John Alleyne, pastor, George Partridge Esq. delegate.—That in Dorchester ; Rev. Thaddeus Mason Harris, pastor, Moses Everett, Esq. delegate.

The council chose the Rev. Dr. Reed as moderator, and the Rev. Mr. Harris as scribe.

The moderator then opened the meeting by prayer to Almighty God, for divine light, direction and guidance on the solemn occasion.

The council next attended to a written statement of the difficulties and divisions which have taken place in this large and once happily united and prosperous church ; with the motives which have influenced the aggrieved members in their opposition to the call and settlement of Mr. Joseph Richardson. The proceedings of the church and parish were then stated, and certain records and documents produced, together with the repeated remonstrances of those of the church and parish who were opposed to Mr Richardson's settlement : all which being seriously deliberated upon, the council passed the following votes, viz.

1. That they consider the aggrieved as having manifested a disposition to adhere to, and prevent a departure from, the usages of the churches in New-England in the call and settlement of gospel ministers.

2. That they recommend to the aggrieved to solicit, that no determination be had on the ordination of Mr. Richardson, until opportunity be afforded for calling a mutual council, to hear their objections, and judge of the propriety of his settlement under existing circumstances.

3. That if disappointed in the request, and they cannot approve of the ordination of Mr. Richardson, or hereafter conscientiously attend on his ministry, they be advised to pursue those measures which wisdom and prudence may dictate as the most likely means for ensuring the stated enjoyment of gospel ordinances, and the promotion of Christian edification among them.

The council having, as they trust, convened with no other disposition and view than to lend their aid in the promotion of Christian peace and order, and the advancement of pure and undefiled religion, cannot willingly separate without expressing their sincere wishes and devout prayers on behalf of this ancient and respectable, but at present unhappily divided, Christian society and church of our Lord Jesus Christ ; that they may ever enjoy the divine protection, guidance and blessing, and, in a particular manner, in this season of their peculiar difficulty and trial,

that they may be under the prevailing influence of that heavenly wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

JOHN REED, *Moderator*.

THADDEUS M. HARRIS, *Scribe*.

A true copy from the original.

[No. LII.]

The proceedings of an Ecclesiastical Council convened in the Third Congregational Society in Hingham, June 16, 1807.

The churches invited to assist on the occasion by their pastors and delegates, were, those in Boston under the care of Doctors Lathrop, Elliot and Kirkland, Mr. Freeman, Mr. Emerson and Mr. Lowell; in Bridgewater, the church under the pastoral care of Dr. Reed; in Roxbury, under the care of Mr. Porter; in Duxbury, under Mr. Alleyne; in Dorchester, under Mr. Harris; in Quincy, under Mr. Whitney; in Hingham, under Mr. Whitney; in Brookline, under Mr. Peirce; in Cohasset, under Mr. Flint; in Chelsea, under Mr. Tuckerman; and the Rev. Professor Ware.

1. Voted that Dr. Elliot be moderator; who opened the meeting by prayer.

2. Voted that Mr. Whitney, of Quincy, be scribe.

3. Attended to all the proceedings of the Third Society from the period of their separation from the First Society.

4. Read a remonstrance from Mr. Richardson's society against the church, connected with the Third Congregational Society in Hingham, assuming the style of the First Church in Hingham. After some discussion of the subject, the church withdrew, and unanimously agreed to take the style of the Third Church in Hingham; not, however, as being induced to do it from the *remonstrance*, which they considered to be fundamentally erroneous in its statements, but merely to prevent any altercation in future. The council also considered this to be their sole motive for the measure.

5. Attended to the invitation of this society to Mr. Colman to settle with them, and his answer.

6. Attended to a letter from Dr. Smith, certifying Mr. Colman to be a member of the church of Christ in Hanover; and his approbation for preaching, from the President and Professor of Dartmouth College.

7. Voted, that Mr. Whitney of Hingham be requested to admit Mr. Colman into the Third Church in Hingham. Mr. Whitney informed the council that he had performed their request.

8. Having considered the literary, moral and religious qualifications of Mr. Colman for the important work to which he was devoting himself—voted unanimously, that this council are fully satisfied with his attainments and views, and are prepared to assign the performances for his ordination.

9. Voted, that Dr. Lathrop be requested to give the charge: that Mr. Whitney of Hingham express the fellowship of the churches: that Drs. Elliot and Reed make the introductory and ordaining prayers as they shall agree; and that Mr. Alleyne, of Duxbury, make the concluding prayer.

10. Voted to adjourn to the Derby Hall till half past 8 o'clock on the 17th instant.

June 17—Met agreeable to adjournment, and passed the following vote [which was publicly read in the meeting-house by the moderator of the council.] Voted, that this council, having attended to the proceedings

of the Third Church and Society in Hingham relative to their separation from the First Church and Society, and the preliminary measures, which they have taken for the ordination of Mr. Henry Colman, do consider them as perfectly correct, regular, and satisfactory.

A true copy.

Attest. PETER WHITNEY, *Scribe.*



ON reviewing the foregoing narrative, I have thought it expedient, in consequence of some things which have recently taken place, to make the following additional observations.

With respect to Mr. Richardson, it may be said, that the circumstances which rendered his character suspicious, and provoked inquiry concerning it, existed prior to his coming to Hingham to offer himself as a candidate for the ministry, and therefore could not be imputable either to his supporters or opposers; and the task of investigation could not be supposed agreeable to the latter; but it was a task that was imposed upon them; and if the result of it has been such as was injurious to him, it may truly be said, that his friends have had their share in contributing to the injury; for the first details we had of those circumstances were from them, the materials of which were probably furnished by Mr. Richardson himself: at least he must have known the method adopted to vindicate his character; and why did he not then, as an honest man, put a stop to relations which had a tendency to sacrifice the reputation of others for the purpose of shielding his own? Let him produce to the world his "Letter of Defence," that they may be enabled to judge from whence the original materials of the reports concerning him were derived. The persons connected with the transactions were generally strangers in Hingham, and their names became known there only as joined with the reports respecting Mr. Richardson which accompanied him into the town.

Much blame has been thrown upon the opposers of Mr. Richardson, as having been officious in preventing exchanges between him and the neighbouring ministers; for want of which he doubtless suffers some inconvenience; but a little attention to the gradual progress of affairs in the parish will show, that while their natural tendency might be to throw obstacles in the way of such exchanges, yet that the opposers might be innocent of any special agency with a design to that effect. During the first four sabbaths of Mr. Richardson's of-

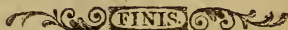
ficiating with us, he obtained an exchange, without difficulty it is presumed, with Mr. Flint of Cohasset. Afterwards, as Mr. Richardson's character became questionable, the continual conversation concerning it gave a publicity to the reports respecting him, which could not be avoided: these of course came to the ears of the neighbouring ministers, and excited their caution respecting an intercourse, till they should be better informed about him. Notwithstanding a strong opposition which now prevailed, grounded on circumstances which were continually unfolding, affecting his moral character, his friends determined still to force him upon the opposers as their minister, and accordingly engaged him for a further time. They then found it expedient, in order to keep open the channel of intercourse between him and the neighbouring ministers, to make some exertions to support his character: with this view they exhibited in various places the recommendations which had been given him previous to a general knowledge of the charges which stood against him, the truth of which charges they at the same time denied. It is well known that the greater part of those ministers were thus applied to by Mr. Richardson or his friends, and had those recommendatory papers shown to them, before any thing had been given them by the opposers: even Mr. Norton, of Weymouth, who has taken such a warm part in favour of Mr. Richardson, I dare say will acknowledge this, as respects himself. In this stage of the business, the opposers, on the other hand, did doubtless communicate to some of those ministers the ground of their distrust of Mr. Richardson's character; and if, on weighing in their minds the opposite accounts, the result was, to keep themselves from a connection with Mr. Richardson, it is some evidence of the weakness of his own ground.

Again, much has been said by Mr. Richardson's friends in favour of the good Mr. Bentley, respecting his disinterested and benevolent labours for establishing Christianity in this place. The part which Mr. Bentley has taken in our affairs is indeed astonishing! He had an enviable opportunity when he was sent for to give advice, had he been actuated by a sincere Christian spirit, to heal the differences, and close the breach, which existed in the parish. He had the confidence of the friends of Mr. Richardson, and might probably have easily led them into those measures that would have made for their peace. But instead of that, we find him giving advice,

and pursuing measures, which must eventually effect a total separation, as detrimental to those whom he was advising, as to their opposers. At length we see him the principal agent in giving the finishing stroke to the work of his own hands, and exulting in a melancholy victory, which broke up as it were a large and ancient family, that had lived in harmony through a long course of time. He apparently managed the ordaining council as he pleased. If we may judge from what appeared at the time, and from a letter since written to Mr. H. Fearing, he sustained, in that body, the threefold character of witness, advocate and judge. He had heard Mr. R's statement—he had prejudged the cause—and, in defiance of the principle of impartiality and equity, he sat on the final decision.—“ But had no one (he says in his letter to Mr. Fearing) of the [ordaining] council heard the statements at Charlestown; and therefore could they not get *all the information they wished for, in the most regular manner?* “ Could the council proceed, and not ask what had been done in the matter?” As much as to say, I have been of the council which met at Charlestown; I heard Mr. Richardson's statements there; I there obtained all the information I wished; that was the most regular channel for obtaining information on the subject; my mind was already made up; all information through any other channel was needless, and must be vitiated; if any members of the ordaining council asked any questions, I was competent to satisfying their minds, for I could tell them “ what had been done in the matter.” Thus was this mockery of an examination conducted; and the common forms of ordination seemed to be prostituted to mere party purposes.

The narrative which I have herein given, with the documents I have adduced in elucidation of it, is respectfully submitted to the public.

THOMAS THAXTER.



ERRATA.

- Page 4, line 1, instead of "never could be," read "*never was obtained.*"
23, .. 1, dele "which," and read "*as his moral character at this time,*"
&c.
- Document No. 2, line 17, read "I will leave the room, and settle," &c.
No. 5, .. 8, instead of "hereby certify," read "*moreover*
certify."
- No. 7, .. 6, read "*he enjoyed occasional communion.*"
No. 10—————instead of "Jesse," read "*Jonathan French.*"
No. 12, .. 6, instead of "an honest man," read "*an honest,*
moral, good man."
No. 18, .. 9, read "*educated and fitted for college in and*
near this town."
No. 41, .. 13, "*his return would have been,*" read "*his re-*
turn, unaccompanied with the most ample ac-
knowledgment, would have been," &c.
No. 43, .. 33, read "*and trial before such a tribunal, but,*"
&c.
.. 40, instead of "I understood there had been,"
read "*I understand there have been.*"
No. 46—————the date should be July 16, 1800, instead of
1806.

APPENDIX.

To BENJAMIN LINCOLN, Esq. and others, a committee, appointed to appear before the council which was convened for the ordination of Mr. Joseph Richardson, in behalf of those who were opposed to that measure.

GENTLEMEN,

HAVING collected and arranged such papers, &c. appertaining to the late unhappy disputes in this place, as would afford the impartial and unprejudiced mind a correct view of those disputes; and being about to publish the same, with some few observations of my own thereon; I have lately seen a pamphlet published by a committee of the First Church and Parish, containing a narrative of those proceedings, many of which, as stated in said pamphlet, appear to me very opposite to truth, or at least are so related and coloured as to convey a very different idea from what I have always entertained, from the knowledge I have had of those transactions. As many of them, however, did not pass under my immediate view, particularly those which appertained to the ordination of Mr. Richardson, not being one of the committee instructed to appear before that council by his opposers; and as the account given thereof by Mr. Bentley, one of that council, is contradictory to the report made by that committee, I could wish, for my own satisfaction, and for the cause of truth, that you would take the trouble to state an account of that, and such other transactions relative thereto, as you may think proper. I am your most obedient, humble servant,

THOMAS THAXTER.

To Dr. THOMAS THAXTER.

SIR,

To every sincere friend and well wisher to the town of Hingham, and the good people of the two societies, which formerly composed the North Parish thereof, it must give pain that any circumstance should take place which should have a tendency to revive that animosity which the division of the parish into two distinct religious societies we hoped had,

or shortly would have, happily terminated. We can most sincerely say for ourselves, and we believe we speak the opinion of our society in general, that as a conscientious sense of duty, in opposing the majority of our brethren in the measures they were adopting, governed us ; so also the attainment of those best of Heaven's blessings, peace, harmony and friendly intercourse, induced us to make the great sacrifice of interest, which was the necessary attendant on a separation.

That the pamphlet to which you allude, and which we have also seen, is calculated to revive and increase that animosity, we strongly apprehend. Whether the compilers and publishers of that pamphlet intended that such should be its operation, we cannot say, but it certainly argued great want of discernment if they did not foresee this natural effect ; and if they did, it would seem to manifest a malignancy of heart. A very critical scrutiny of that performance is unnecessary to discover some traits of that disposition ; for he must be base indeed, who could touch on private character, by which the merits of a cause in dispute are not in the least affected. Indeed, without taking into consideration this natural and deplorable tendency of the pamphlet, a slight view of the production would lead one to suppose, that its compilers had fully embraced the sentiments of one of their number, an active and influential member of their society, who explicitly declared in public meeting, that, in the parish controversy, "religion had nothing to do in the business, with him."

Such, sir, being our view of the tendency of the aforesaid pamphlet, and indeed in a degree of any publication or narrative on that subject, however correct, we exceedingly regret that any should have appeared, and especially in a form which compels us in justification of ourselves, and in vindication of the truth, to correct some gross errors therein ; and to make a few observations on the productions of two reverend gentlemen, contained in the said pamphlet, on which it would seem, by the manner in which they are introduced, the compilers thereof build great expectations.

The pamphlet purports to be a Vindication of the proceedings of the First Church and Parish in Hingham, in settling the Rev. Joseph Richardson as their gospel minister. It professes to contain a narrative of their doings from the first of Mr. R's coming among them, until his ordination and the incorporation of the Third Congregational Society. It also ex-

hibits the evidences of the good character of the candidate, and shews the satisfaction which those evidences produced on their minds—that it was sufficient to induce them to give him a call.

Their first doing was, hiring Mr. Richardson for four sabbaths ; to vindicate which, as it appears by their note they considered it requisite, they say he was first introduced by Dr. Levi Lincoln and Eben. Gay, Esq. and by the insinuation that their politics were different from those of the candidate, they exonerate those gentlemen from improper motives in inviting him. But who was the *cause* of his being put on the list of candidates, and who insisted on its being done, pretending at the same time he hardly knew his name, or the place of his abode ? It was Mr. Hawkes Fearing ; who it is believed had little knowledge of him, except of his political character. Their next doing was (contrary to the spirit of a previous vote of the parish, not to hear any candidate but four sabbaths) to hire him for eight sabbaths longer ; and this they state, in the “ Vindication,” to have been done, after many wounding reports respecting him were in circulation. Whether this part of their proceedings needed vindication or not, they do not appear to have attempted one.

But the disposition to ascertain what was truth concerning the various reports prejudicial to the character of their candidate, afterwards apparently manifested by instructing a committee to inquire into Mr. Richardson’s character, &c. was very proper ; and had the committee executed their trust, the result might have been satisfactory to his opposers. What was their instruction ? To inquire what was truth concerning the various reports prejudicial to the character of their candidate. But what was their report ? why truly, their *opinion* that Mr. Richardson was a gentleman of a good moral character ; and that it was formed from sundry documents which they had obtained, shewing what his character was in the *opinions* of the writers, prior to the time to which these charges alluded ; and connected with no circumstances relating to the reports in circulation against him ; excepting a *general exoneration from all illiberal surmises and dishonourable charges*, by the selectmen of Charlestown ; and a certificate of the trustees of a school there “ that, as far as their acquaintance with him went, they found him to be a good schoolmaster ; and *believed* him an honest, moral, good man.”

But was this executing their commission, which was, to inquire what was truth concerning the various reports prejudicial to his character? We think not; and we cannot but think that the conduct of the parish in accepting that report as satisfactory, needs more vindication than appears in the pamphlet.

However extraordinary it may appear to the compilers of the "Vindication," that this report, with the documents exhibited, should not satisfy all, of the falsehood of the charges in circulation, to us it appears as extraordinary that it should satisfy any;* and we flatter ourselves we shall stand acquitted, by all persons of discernment and impartiality, from the charge of being predetermined by other reasons than those which respect moral character, who will view the evidence on which our opinion was formed. Nor can it be considered either unfair or dishonest, in our preparing a protest against a measure which was clearly foreseen would take place, by the manner in which the inquiry into his character was to be made, and the description of persons composing the committee. Candour and a solicitude to obtain truth would have dictated an equal number of each party on the committee, which might have produced union and harmony: but this was refused; and all the committee were his adherents; and, as was expected, the acceptance of the report was followed by a call of the candidate, and a protest from the opposition.

The next step to be vindicated is, the calling of the candidate without the concurrence of the church. This is acknowledged to have been the case. Their reasons for this extraordinary conduct (for they appear to view it as needing an apology, and we believe another instance of the kind cannot be produced, where there was not a perfect harmony in the society) are, the inclemency of the season, sickness, age and infirmity of its members. This statement we believe to be correct; and to it might have been added, a consciousness that no meeting of the church could be holden in which a majority in favour of a concurrence with the parish could be obtained. They say, "It was judged most proper, and

* We would not be here understood as calling in question the respectability of the sources from whence these documents were derived, but merely that they did not contradict any reports which had been in circulation, prejudicial to the character of Mr. R. nor invalidate any charge which had been brought against him.

equally fair and valid, to dispense with a formal meeting, and to unite with the *parish*, by a written instrument, which was done by a majority of the church." We here concede to the statement, that there were then living forty-six male members; of this number, however, three had never heard the candidate preach, nor have they since, nor probably ever will: two, by a long course of mental derangement, were considered as entirely disqualified to transact any business; two others had for years withdrawn themselves from communion, and two others had repeatedly declared they would take no part in the business. The names of some of those members, however, must have been among those who constituted a majority of the forty-six by signature. This being the state of the church, less discernment than the conductors of their affairs were known to possess, would have been ample to have discovered the result of a meeting of the church, and pretty clearly shews why no one church member of the adherents of Mr. Richardson attended the meeting holden on the 9th of January, 1806.

The "Vindication" states, "that the disaffected members of the church, thinking to take advantage of this measure, pretend," &c. Advantage of what measure? the concurrence of the church by signature? No such measure was heard of until after the meeting was holden; nor, it is believed, was adopted until after the meeting was warned. But the "Vindication" denies that any regular church meeting was holden*

* We cannot omit here noticing one *curiosity* in the "Vindication." In a marginal note, in the thirty-third page, it is said, "It has been already shewn that there was no regular meeting of the church on the 9th of January, 1806. This can be *proved* by *substantial* evidence, and that a call had been presented to Mr. Richardson, signed by a majority of the members of the church, previous to his giving his answer." In the seventy-fourth page, in a note, it is said, "The following document furnishes the proof referred to in the thirty-third page." Then follows a document, dated Dec. 23, 1806, in which five persons, professing to be a committee of the First Church, "certify that no meeting of the First Church in Hingham was holden on the said 9th of January, for reasons which are then stated.

This document, it seems (according to the understanding of the vindicators) *proves*, that there was no meeting of the church, and that Mr. Richardson was presented with a call by signatures, previous to his giving his answer. And it is *substantial* evidence too. We, on the other hand, *prove*, by the *records of the church*, that such a meeting was *warned*; and can *prove*, by the same *records*, that such a meeting was *holden*. In one respect, however, we confess our evidence is not so *substantial* as that of our brethren who compiled the "Vindication." Ours does not *prove* that Mr. Richardson had not a call by signatures.

on the 9th of January, 1806, because, it says, the object of the meeting was not generally known, nor was it warned in the usual time, in the customary manner, or holden at the stated place." That the object of the meeting was fully understood, is beyond dispute, as the subject was the constant and almost only topic of conversation. No time, manner or place had ever been established, either by a vote of the church, or statute of the legislature. It was judged, and we think very correctly, that when there was no pastor, the deacons were the regular presiding and governing officers in the church. These issued a notification for a church meeting, as will appear by the following extract from the records of the church:—"Application having been made to us the subscribers to call a meeting of the male members of the First Church of Christ in Hingham, we hereby give notice that a meeting thereof will be holden at the Derby Academy, on Thursday, the 9th day of January instant, at 1 o'clock, P. M. at which time and place all the male members are requested to attend."—[Signed]—"Joseph Thaxter, Benjamin Cushing, William Cushing, David Lincoln, jun. deacons.

Hingham, Jan. 6, 1806."

"We, the subscribers, being appointed by the deacons to warn a meeting of the church agreeably to the above application, hereby certify, that we have performed that service."—[Signed]—"Levi Lincoln, Samuel Norton, Nathan Rice, William Cushing, David Lincoln, jun. committee."

This notification, as certified, was served to every member of the church, except to a Mr. Ebenezer Lincoln, who was forgotten, probably because he had not attended meeting for years, through extreme old age and sickness, and was one of those who had never heard the candidate preach; also, Capt. Thomas Fearing, who happened to be out of town when the notification was left at his house. This was certainly a more general and sure mode of notification than any other that could have been adopted. The place for holding the meeting was selected for the accommodation and comfort of the aged and infirm, it being provided with a good fire. At this meeting, it is true, as stated in the "Vindication," "there were twenty-one members present, who protested against the measure of the parish: but, says the "Vindication," "one of them, Mr. John Beal, was a member of the church in Cohasset, and his relation to it was never transferred to

that of Hingham." It may be true, but it is also true he had been upwards of forty years a regular communicant in it, and had uniformly acted in the church, particularly in the ordination of the Rev. Dr. Ware. The candid and impartial public will judge of the regularity of this church meeting, from the foregoing statement of facts; and also of the regularity of the doings of the parish, and the concurrence of a majority of the members of the church by signature. It ought also to be considered, however, that much deception, misrepresentation, and management, might have been and probably were used by those employed to obtain the signatures of persons of the aforesaid description, who could have no opportunity of inquiring what was truth respecting such statements, if they had the ability. The *candour* of these vindicators in not divulging those circumstances attending this church meeting, which would so unfavourably impress the reader, if stated, but a statement of which they say justice demanded, is less astonishing to us, as during the whole of these unhappy disputes they have uniformly refused to do for us what justice demanded, although we do not recollect ever to have heard it ascribed to their candour before.

The vindication of the next step of the parish, which was the convening of a reference of clergymen at Charlestown, to settle the disputes, between Mr. Richardson on the one part and the parish on the other, we think a pretty difficult undertaking; for it was to vindicate the mode of settling a dispute which never existed. Had the dispute been between Mr. Richardson and the parish, it would probably have been settled by a dismissal of the candidate. The fact was, the dispute was between Mr. Richardson and the parish on one part, and certain individuals on the other—and it seems one party in dispute chose to submit the cause to such a reference as they thought proper to select: the other party in dispute, as was natural, not agreeing to it, would have nothing to do in the business: and that they judged properly is manifest by the recommendation of those clergymen to Mr. Richardson and the parish: and notwithstanding all the plausible reasoning which the "Vindication" exhibits, to show that we ought to have appeared before that tribunal for the settlement of the controversy, considering the parish had been at so much trouble and expense to give them this *fair opportunity* of doing it, we doubt whether any but themselves will

believe "we shunned investigation, or suspected that our cause rested on a trembling foundation." Had we been obliged to have submitted our cause to a reference thus chosen, and to such persons as might have been selected, our cause would have indeed been hopeless.

The "Vindication" proceeds to state, "that conciliatory measures were still the wish and object of the parish," and as an evidence thereof, it says, "That agreeably to the recommendation of the reference at Charlestown," at a legal meeting on the 8th of March, 1806, it was voted, That the parish contract with Mr. Richardson as their public teacher of religion, till such time as he shall be ordained, with this proviso, that whenever his opposers wish to call a reference of gospel ministers, on these conditions, viz. the opposition two, his friends two, Mr. Richardson two, and Mr. Richardson and his opposers a seventh, to investigate his moral character,"* &c. A

* This proposition they say was rejected. What proposition was rejected? by whom was it rejected? and to whom was it made? This *proposition*, as it is called, was neither more nor less than a vote of the parish to *contract* with Mr. Richardson as their public teacher of religion; which vote, (or proposition, as they term it) was accepted by him, and by this acceptance he entered into a civil contract, which was equally binding on both parties, and was to continue in force for life, unless he should be ordained, or unless a reference of ministers (a majority of whom were to be chosen by himself and friends) should declare him to be, in their opinion, disqualified in point of moral character for a gospel minister.

It appears, by the manner in which this transaction is stated in the "Vindication," as if no such contract was made, but that it was proposed and rejected. We are not surprised that they should wish to keep so extraordinary a measure out of sight.

By the terms of this contract, if a council had been called for the ordination of Mr. Richardson, and if they had refused to ordain him, for whatever reasons, it would still have remained in force. And if his friends should diminish to the number of two, and his opposers increase in the same proportion, from whatever cause, the parish would still be holden by the contract to support him, unless he should be ordained and then dismissed, or unless a reference, selected principally by himself and his two friends, should condemn him as provided in the said contract, and the parish would be completely deprived, by their own act, of those rights of which they pretended to be so tenacious.

The next *proposition*, which was contained in a letter addressed by Mr. Richardson to Gen. Lincoln, was made, not because Mr. Richardson was not legally established, but, it is believed, because many of his adherents were uneasy, and some actually refused to attend meeting while his establishment was of such an unprecedented nature. Something was therefore thought necessary to be done, and this proposition was made, which they say was rejected, but was followed by one from the opposers, in these terms, &c. But how it was rejected, and what took place before that of the opposers was made, they are careful to *remember to forget to state*.

vindication of this transaction is not attempted, unless the declaration that it was adopted "agreeably to the recommendation of the members composing the reference at Charlestown" is one. We believe, however, that those gentlemen will hardly thank the people of Hingham for insinuating that they recommended so unrighteous and extraordinary a measure. No such sentiment was contained in their recommendation, but the contrary. Such a preamble therefore to this part of the narrative must be both weak and wicked, for a slight recurrence to that recommendation would prove its fallacy.

The "Vindication" next states, "that the parish now relinquished their ideas of right, and agreed to meet the opposers on their own ground, who claimed one half the council; that it was rejected by them, but another offered in its stead, which was not accepted by the parish." It may here be proper to state the prominent features of distinction in the two propositions. That of Mr. Richardson proposed five gospel ministers for the reference; that of the opposition, eleven or thirteen. That of Mr. Richardson provided, that if the reference did not condemn him, by determining his moral character to be really such as to disqualify him for the office of a gospel minister, opposition to him should cease. That of the opposition provided, that if the reference, after hearing the allegations, &c. would recommend him, and give it as their opinion that he was a man of good moral character, and true piety, and suitable for a gospel minister, then opposition should cease; otherwise, the connexion between the candidate and

The facts are these:—The proposition of Mr. Richardson was communicated by Gen. Lincoln to the opposition, who instructed a committee to answer it. This committee informed Mr. Richardson, by letter, that his opposers were entirely willing to comply with the recommendation of the ministers who assembled at Charlestown (at the request of himself and his friends) in calling a mutual ecclesiastical council, or, if more agreeable to him, a reference of ministers, for the purposes expressed by them. To this he replied, that it was thought by himself and friends improper to reply to our propositions until we had accepted or rejected those which he had offered. He was answered by the committee, that their other communication was predicated on the recommendation of the ministers above mentioned (which those ministers said was the *only regular mode of settling the differences*) and that they still adhered to the principles therein contained. Thus ended the correspondence. The proposition, which the "Vindication" states to have been made on the 17th of April, was made after this correspondence was ended. The whole truth would not answer their purpose.

parish should cease. The opposers' objections to five only, or rather, their wishes for eleven or thirteen, arose from the consideration, that in a multitude of counsel there is safety; that the result, whatever it might be, would be more satisfactory; especially if the reference were pretty well united; and would be less likely to be swayed by prejudice and party considerations. In respect to the other difference, it was believed that the character of a candidate for the ministry ought to be such as to merit recommendation; that to condemn is an unpleasant task, and in such a case would be fatal to character; that a reference might decline to condemn, who would be unwilling to recommend. The "Vindication" says, in a note, that it was inconsistent to require of the reference an opinion or belief "that the candidate was a man of true piety, as none but the Omniscient Searcher of Hearts could determine it." An opinion certainly can be formed, although it may be erroneous: we are authorised to judge by the fruit what the tree is.

As the "Vindication" has mistated, that the proceedings on the 8th of March, 1806, were agreeable to the recommendation of the clergymen at Charlestown; it ought to have stated what was the truth, viz. that the opposition, in the third article of the warrant for calling that meeting, proposed to the parish the calling of a mutual ecclesiastical council, agreeably to the recommendation of those clergymen, which the parish refused, although it was strongly urged by the opposers.

The pamphlet next goes on to state, that the opposers (on the 17th April, 1806) requested the parish to vote assent to a separation, which was unanimously given; but it states "it to have been done under the most unequivocal assurance that it should terminate all disputes respecting the settlement of Mr. Richardson. This, however, does not appear, and no such stipulations were ever made; although it was the intention of the opposers, if they were incorporated, to make no opposition; nor would any have appeared, if the most unequivocal evidence had not been given, prior to the ordination, that opposition to the incorporation was intended: for it must be remarked, that the vote of the parish did not constitute a legal separation. The evidence of this consists in the refusal of their principal and most influential characters to signify in writing that they would make no opposition to

the separation, and the actual opposition of Mr. Fearing, the representative of the town, thereto, in the session of the legislature in May ; for it was the expectation of the opposition, when the vote of the parish was given, that the act would be obtained at this session, and it undoubtedly would have been, had it not been opposed by Mr. Fearing. Should this, however, not seem sufficient to establish the correctness of our opinion and subsequent conduct, as the ultimate opposition of the parish might by some be considered as problematical, we here refer the reader to the votes of the parish of January 5, 1807 ; which were, amongst other things, " that the population and wealth of the parish are very incompetent to the maintenance of two religious societies ; and that the parish are in duty bound to use their best possible influence to prevent an act being made for that purpose ;" and then chose a committee of five to carry these votes into effect. We would also refer to the remonstrance of the parish, by that committee, to the legislature, which, among other things, says, " The petitioners *seem* to ground their petition for a separation, and incorporation, on what they *term* an unanimous vote of the parish consenting thereto ; but, when that matter is understood, they believed it would appear, there was no foundation for the petition *in that respect* ; and that they are now acting with entire consistency in opposing the same petition to the utmost of their exertion ;"* and therefore in the last clause of the remonstrance they say, " Wherefore the inhabitants, remonstrants, humbly pray, they (the petitioners) may have leave to withdraw their petition." This remonstrance seems to unravel the business, and explains the original intentions, if not of the parish, of those who had the direction of their affairs ; for it says " when *that matter* is understood, there will appear no foundation for the petition." What is it to be understood ? They do not expressly tell us in words, but in what is stronger (in their conduct) they do tell us pretty plainly, viz. When it is understood that the parish was not sincere in their vote, and could, by it, get rid of the opposition at the ordination (for it was not believed at this time that an ecclesiastical council could be *mustered up*, who would ordain Mr. Richardson while there were so many of

* If they had said with their *usual* consistency, they would have been correct.

the parish opposed to it) that then the separation was not to take place, if it could be prevented. Convinced therefore of the designs of the parish; to prevent or delay the ordination of Mr. Richardson until the separation was effected by an act of the legislature, became the duty of his opposers, dictated by prudence, justified by circumstances, and advised by the reverend council, called to advise the aggrieved party what they ought to do under existing circumstances. Resting fully satisfied that the public will justify them for their attempts, from the foregoing statement; they conceive they shall also be acquitted for appearing before the ordaining council to state their objections to his character and conduct, with the evidences to support them, when it is considered that Mr. Richardson, in a letter addressed to Gen. Lincoln, called upon his opposers so to do; a neglect to do it might in a degree have sanctioned an insinuation which had frequently been made, that the opposition had fabricated those reports, or that they believed them unsupportable. The circumstances which attended the admission of a number of persons into the church, taking into view the time, and the subsequent transaction of the church in so soon after concurring with the parish in the call of Mr. Richardson, did seem to confirm the opinion of the opposers, that till that took place it was the belief of Mr. Richardson's friends that a vote of the church could not be obtained for it, and that the measure was necessary (notwithstanding the pretended call by signature) to render their doings regular and valid. But we cannot but differ from Mr. Bentley in opinion, that this cured the difficulty and rectified the original irregularity. It was considered too delicate a subject, by those who had withdrawn their attendance on public worship under Mr. Richardson to appear in opposition to the admission of the members propounded to the church, the purity of whose motives was known only to themselves and their God. If, however, the proceedings of the parish had been irregular, as Mr. Bentley seems to have admitted: and if the vote of concurrence by the church, after the admission of these persons by Mr. Bentley, was necessary to rectify this irregularity, and to promote the ordination; it must have been considered a very fortunate circumstance, by those who *wished* for this event, that such a *conversion* to Christianity should have taken place at *this particular period*.

Whether blame ought to be attached to the opposition for withdrawing from attendance on public worship, under the ministration of a man to whose morality and deportment they had serious objections, and providing a preacher for themselves, must be left to the public to decide. They feel justified in their own minds, and have already had (as the "Vindication" testifies) the countenance and support of a number of clergymen, particularly the Rev. Dr. Ware (our late worthy pastor) whose character for discernment, uprightness and liberality is far above the reach of the shafts of malice, and whose approbation will do much towards establishing the justice of our cause in the minds of those who are unacquainted with the merits of the controversy.*

The "Vindication" pretends to attach much blame to the opposers for withholding the documents which implicated Mr. Richardson's character, from him and his friends. To this it may be replied, that the contents of the documents, and the authors of them, were communicated to him and his friends, who called on those who possessed them therefor; and some of the reasons for not delivering up the originals, or giving copies thereof, may be seen in a letter addressed by Col. Rice to Mr. Richardson; and that he fully knew the contents, and understood from whence they came, was manifest by his letter to the parish, explanatory of his conduct. It ought, however, to be remarked, that copies of all those documents were afterwards offered to the parish, at the parish meeting, Dec. 10, 1805, and previous to the vote for calling him, on condition that a copy of the aforesaid communication from Mr. Richardson should also be given to the opposers; but this was not agreed to by the parish. What then can be thought of the declaration made in the 78th page of that pamphlet, that they could never obtain the favour of those documents? That a blush for the depravity of human nature should have been raised, cannot be thought extraordinary: he must be more hardened in iniquity than falls to the lot of many, that could make such a declaration without blushing.

Having proceeded to state and justify the transactions of the First Church and Parish, to the time of the convening of the council for the ordination of Mr. R. (and how they have

* Some of the signers of the "Vindication," we think, must have felt some secret *qualms* when applauding the conduct of the parish towards their late minister.

succeeded, the public will judge) the compilers of the "Vindication" undertake briefly to sketch that transaction;* and frankly own, that the inquiry then to be made was "not intended to give any satisfaction to the opposition, but to the council and the public." A very candid declaration; it discovers a very benevolent, christian-like disposition indeed, not to wish to satisfy or reconcile a part of the parish, who had borne about two fifths of the parish expenses, according to their own statement; and whom, notwithstanding the parish had consented to their separation from them, they intended yet to retain and compel to defray a large portion of the expense of supporting a man, on whom they could not conscientiously attend, with the belief and impressions they then had.

It says, "the council could not conveniently have proceeded in the business in the midst of a crowd, which would have taken place in the meeting-house." It is believed it would have been a very unpleasant thing for the council to have proceeded *as they did*, in the meeting-house, unless the same measures had been taken there, which were at Mr. Fearing's, to prevent people from hearing. And by this they seem to think, notwithstanding Mr. Bentley's opinion, "that none wished to hear but the opposers, and they were few," that a crowd of people would have attended, had it been in a place where they could have been admitted. It is supposed, as many observations are not made in the "Vindication," on the conduct of the opposers before that council, its compilers relied on the history thereof given by Mr. Bentley. They however make one decided declaration, "that no competent witness, or legal evidence whatever, was produced to support their high charges; but only a parcel of letters, from persons of whose character they chose to say nothing." This it is presumed will be considered, although it was not so intended, as a recommendation of those letter writers; for, had it been possible in truth to have cast a blemish on their characters, it is presumed it would not have been omitted, judging, by the "Vindication," of the disposition of its compilers.

* It is stated in the "Vindication," that at the meeting of the church for making arrangements for the ordination, the votes were carried 24 to 13. We would here observe, that this majority was partly composed of the new members admitted by Mr. Bentley, all of whom, it is believed, were present at that meeting; and also that a number of the opposers did not attend.

What was the amount of the evidence thus adduced, and the weight it deserved, the public will judge. What it had with the council, is manifest.

After giving the result of the council, the "Vindication" produces the report of the committee of the opposition, made to their constituents. On this report it makes but few comments ; but observes, that they believed it was communicated to the clergy, accessible by them, far and near. If this was the case, it must have had a pretty extensive circulation ; yet we believe, without the influence of this report, there are few of the clergy in the commonwealth, who have heard of the proceedings of the parish, but have justified and countenanced the measures of the opposition.

Here it ought to be observed, that the report in question was made by the committee to their society only, to convey to them a true and faithful narrative of what took place before the council. And, notwithstanding the illiberal remarks contained in the marginal notes of the "Vindication" (many of which, it is believed, will not be considered very pertinent ; some, mere assertions without proof, and opinions without argument) the subscribers of that report pledge themselves for the truth of those things which are stated as facts therein. And, notwithstanding the opinion of the compilers of the "Vindication," of Mr. Bentley, and Mr. Norton, we believe the representations and opinions, stated therein, correct.

On the marginal account given of the transaction which took place between Dr. Morse and Mr. Richardson, as given by Mr. Richardson in the 35th page of the pamphlet, which was the foundation of a serious objection to him by his opposers, it may be here sufficient only to state, that Dr. Morse, having seen the same, has certified on the margin of that page, in a copy of the pamphlet, that *that* account is false in almost every particular thereof.

The compilers of the pamphlet, having fully vindicated the conduct of the First Church and Parish, as they conceive, by their assertions, and Mr. Bentley and Mr. Norton's reasoning (of which we shall take notice hereafter) proceed to take a survey of the proceedings of the Third Congregational Society, and insinuate, that their settlement of a minister was irregular ; but wherein is not stated, unless it is because the First Church were not assenting to it, by voting the dismissal from that church, of those members who had united with the

Third Congregational Society. But does this render the settlement of a minister irregular, or the establishment of a new church improper? The large and respectable council convened on that occasion, did not so consider it; and we cannot but believe the clergymen of this council entitled to as much confidence and esteem—that they were as capable of judging, and as honest in acting—as the compilers of the “Vindication,” or the *three* reverend gentlemen who sanctioned the proceedings of the First Church and Parish, and approved of the conduct and character of the candidate. But to what does their reasoning amount? or their quotation from the platform of the churches prove, if it proves any thing? Nothing more than that these members of their church, who had thus withdrawn themselves without their approbation, had done an illegal and sinful thing, for which, perhaps, they ought to be excommunicated from their church; and not that it was irregular to form them into a new church, and ordain a minister over them and others, who were by an act of the legislature incorporated.—But it is evident, from the words in the parenthesis of the paragraph of the platform quoted, that no such case as the present was contemplated. But we contend that the members of the church who were the adherents of Mr. Richardson, were in fact the seceders, and the opposers were the First Church. The parish, having the controul of the meeting-house, had introduced into the desk a man, against whose settlement the church (at a regular meeting, as has been shewn) protested. Of course, it being improper for them to attend public worship under his ministration, and being refused the use of the meeting-house, before and after the usual hours of worship, they resolved to hold their meetings in another place, which they had the same right to do, as any other society. But the church withdrawing from the meeting-house, was very different from the members withdrawing from the church. The latter we conceive to have been the case with the adherents of Mr. Richardson, who continued to attend his ministration, and who advocated measures in opposition to those which had been adopted by the church. And we think we are fully authorised, by the result of Mr. Colman’s ordaining council, to conclude, that had not those, who now constitute the Third Church, voluntarily waved the right, they would have been recognised as the First Church, and could have maintained that pre-

cedency, with all its advantages, in any court, civil or ecclesiastical. The mystery, therefore, how members of a church, thus separating themselves, could be formed into a new church, in regular standing, expressed in their next paragraph, we think will cease, without the aid of the venerable council who sanctioned it. The "Vindication" allows, that if this council had heard the merits of the dispute, and had after that thought it right, then they might have established them as a separate church; and yet they have just before said, how it could be done was to them a mystery. We say in reply, had some of the members of this council been admitted to have heard the merits of the dispute, at the ordination of Mr. Richardson (as they applied to be, but were refused) they might have been able to have communicated to this council as correct information, and it would have been as *regular a channel of information*, as was Mr. Bentley to the other council.

Among the many errors and mistatments in the "Vindication," we cannot omit noticing one; and we are exceedingly at a loss to account for its introduction, unless it be, that some act of candour, benevolence and liberality might appear on their part towards the aggrieved part of the church. It says, "The church of the First Parish had lent a number of silver cups, to those who had separated themselves from the church, and had suffered other property to remain in their hands, with the assurance they would give them up when called for." In this story there appears not even the shadow of truth. That it could not be the case, is evident from these circumstances: All the deacons, of whom there were four, were among the aggrieved members; the church plate and property, as it is believed is universally the case, was (*ex officio*) in their hands for care and safe keeping; and how the church could loan the property, or when it was done, cannot be conceived (unless it was done by some *paper* containing the *signatures of the majority of the church*, expressing such a loan, and kept concealed.) But a church meeting was holden in the usual place, when it was voted to divide the church property, upon just principles, according to numbers.*

* This meeting was warned in the same manner with that which was held on the 9th of January, 1806; but none of the adherents of Mr. Richardson attended. Probably for the same reasons which prevented them from attending the other meeting.

A request was also made to the deacons, to loan any additional quantity of the table furniture more than half, which should be requested of them by the other part of the church. It seems therefore the vindicators must have mistaken this friendly act of the aggrieved members of the church for their own, or it was a wilful and designed misrepresentation, to impress the public mind favourably towards them. If doubts were expressed by the deacons, in delivering the property, it was because they viewed themselves responsible therefor; they were not put out of office, nor others appointed in their stead, in what was called the First Church. They were however advised to give it up to a committee of that church, who might be chosen for that purpose, taking a receipt therefor, which was done. The public will determine what credit ought to be attached to the account of this transaction in the "Vindication."

We cannot but notice, on the closing leaf of the "Vindication," the use made of Dr. Cummings's letter, or testimony, as they call it, to discredit the evidences adduced of certain persons, to substantiate the allegations against Mr. Richardson, notwithstanding, in a note on the 21st page, it is said, "Can any thing be more absurd than a pretence that a letter could be used to defend a man's character and conduct subsequent to the date of said letter? Dr. Cummings's letter was used only to vindicate Mr. Richardson's character and conduct prior to the date." This absurdity appears in the use made thereof in the above instance.

Being weary of pointing out the absurdities, inconsistencies and mistatements in the "Vindication,"* we shall, without farther noticing them, proceed as was proposed to make some remarks, and correct some errors in the two reverend gentlemen's productions, published in the pamphlet; and, as these wonderful productions appear to have been intended as strictures on the report which was made by the committee of the opposition to their constituents, it may be proper here to insert that report.

THE Committee appointed to represent that part of the Church and Congregation in the North Parish in Hingham,

* How far Mr. Richardson was concerned in these mistatements, &c. may be pretty correctly judged by those who will take the trouble to compare his productions with that which we have been reviewing.

which was opposed to the settlement of Joseph Richardson as gospel minister in that place, have attended the arduous and disagreeable service assigned them, and submit the following report.

Agreeably to their instructions, your committee collected a number of documents and evidences in support of the charges which had been alledged against Mr. Richardson, and made such arrangements as the short time allowed them would permit. On Monday, 30th of June, they met a council, which had been invited to assemble by the aggrieved members of the church, and laid before them a statement of the proceedings of the parish, the church, and opposition, from the time Mr. Richardson first came among us. On Tuesday, July 1st, they appeared at Mr. Fearing's tavern, at the hour appointed; but the ordaining council not having convened, they retired, on being assured by Mr. Fearing that they should be notified as soon as the council should be assembled and ready to proceed. At 5 o'clock, P. M. a billet, signed by *Joseph Richardson*, was received by Gen. Lincoln, informing him that the council were assembled, and were ready to hear any evidences in support of the allegations contained in the protest signed by himself and others; and that an immediate attendance was requested.

Your committee immediately repaired to Mr. Fearing's, where they found the room; in which the council were assembled, guarded by a constable with his staff, and an assistant with a cane, and after being interrogated whether they were a committee in behalf of the opposition, were admitted to the council, who had previously organised themselves, and were surrounded by the committee of the parish, and that part of the church who were adherents to Mr. Richardson. The council consisted of a deputation from four churches only, among whom were but three clergymen—Rev. Mr. Barker of Middleborough, moderator, Rev. Mr. Bentley of Salem, scribe, Rev. Mr. Briggs of Plymton—with one delegate each, and two delegates from the church at Tewksbury, one of whom was father in law to Mr. Richardson. It appeared by subsequent observations that the council had, previous to the attendance of your committee, heard such statements as Mr. Richardson and his adherents had thought proper to make, and that they proceeded under the impression that the opposition were not considered a part of the society, and contribut-

ed nothing towards the support of parish expenses, which was not a fact. Also, that they intended not to admit any allegations in addition to those contained in the protest alluded to in Mr. Richardson's billet.

The committee, after exhibiting their credentials, presented a written request to the council, that the question which was submitted to their decision should be discussed in the meeting-house, that all persons who felt interested might have an opportunity of hearing and judging for themselves. In support of this request it was urged, that if the business was conducted in private, appearances would be suspicious, and the result unsatisfactory, and that the most effectual way for Mr. Richardson to vindicate his character and place it in a fair light to the world, if he was really innocent, was to have it publicly investigated. That, on the other hand, the characters of Mr. Richardson's opposers were implicated, they having been accused of fabricating the charges against him, and therefore were in justice entitled to the privilege of at least proving their own innocence in a public manner.

All arguments, however, were unavailing. Mr. Bentley, who assumed and exercised throughout the whole discussion the right of deciding for the council on every question, strongly objected, for two reasons : one, that it would consume too much time ; the other, that the council were convened at the request of the church and parish ; that the parish had appointed a committee to conduct and direct the proceedings, that the council had examined and found them regular, and had approved thereof, and by their approbation had bound themselves to adhere to the regulation of said committee ; that therefore the council had in fact already determined the hearing should be in the place in which they were assembled, and they were not at liberty to sit elsewhere. He said, the parish at large were satisfied, and did not wish to be hearers ; but if the opposers of Mr. Richardson wished to transgress the rules of order and regularity, and the vote of the parish, he was willing they should be admitted. " There are but few of them," said he, addressing himself to the council and the adherents of Mr. Richardson ; " let them come in : " then, turning to the committee, observed, he thought this a great condescension in the council, and an evidence they had no wish to exclude any who had an inclination to hear the discussion. Notwithstanding this boasted liberality of Mr. Bentley,

care was taken not to give instructions to the constable stationed at the door to carry it into effect. The request to sit in the meeting-house being refused, it was stated by the committee that in consequence of the unhappy division of the parish, and the appointment of the ordination, the opposers, not fully relying on their own judgment, had thought it expedient to solicit the advice of an ecclesiastical council in respect to the conduct they ought to pursue on the occasion; that they had accordingly invited the Rev. Dr. Reed of Bridgewater, Rev. Mr. Harris of Dorchester, Rev. Mr. Allyne of Duxbury, and the Rev. Mr. Porter of Roxbury, with their delegates; that they were then in session, and that to be able to form a correct opinion, and advise understandingly, they conceived it necessary they should be made acquainted with all the facts on both sides of the question, and requested they might be admitted for that purpose.

Mr. Bentley said he thought this a very extraordinary request; he had no notion of having a jury upon their conduct. There were many wonderful events taking place in this day of wonders, but he thought this the most wonderful. "O," said he, "you must ask for something more reasonable than that." After this a request was made that the beforementioned gentlemen should be admitted to hear in the capacity of private clergymen. This, being objected to by the parish committee, was consequently not granted by the council, although some of the clergymen some time after applied personally for admission. These requests being rejected with contempt, your committee, after having read a statement of the proceedings of the parish, the church and the opposition, proceeded to state their objections to Mr. Richardson's ordination; but they soon found they were before a tribunal under the entire control of Mr. Bentley, who had apparently predetermined to disregard every objection, and who descended from the sacred office of judge, in a cause of such magnitude and solemnity, to take the part of an attorney for the defendant, with all the zeal of an interested partizan. To every allegation and evidence which was exhibited, he would apply some artful insinuation, sneer, or contemptuous observation, intended to destroy its force, and prejudice the minds of the council. The committee easily foresaw, from the conduct of the council, what would be their final decision, ere they had fairly entered on the merits of the question; but a sense of

duty impelled them to proceed, though under the most discouraging circumstances.

The committee objected to Mr. Richardson's ordination for two general reasons:—1st. Because they considered the manner of his call and acceptance irregular and unprecedented. 2d. Because they believed him an unsuitable person in point of moral character to be employed in the gospel ministry.

In support of the first objection, it was shewn that the parish, at a meeting December 10th, 1805, voted to give Mr. Richardson a call, without consulting the church, or even communicating to them the result of their meeting: that on the 9th of January, 1806, a meeting of the church was holden, when it was voted to nonconcur the doings of the parish in the call of Mr. Richardson, and protest against the same: that Mr. Richardson's answer of acceptance, dated Jan. 6th, 1806, was read the 19th of the same month: that on the 8th of June following, eight males and a number of females, all adherents of Mr. Richardson, were admitted into the church by Mr. Bentley, thereby giving a decided majority in that body in favour of Mr. Richardson: that at a meeting of the church, 19th of June, 1806, it was voted to concur in the call of the parish, given Dec. 10th, 1805, and at a subsequent parish meeting, holden 28th of June, a vote was passed to concur with the church in their last mentioned vote of concurrence with the parish; and to this call of the church and parish, if it may be so denominated, Mr. Richardson had never given an answer. Mr. Richardson said he was ready to give one then. Much desultory conversation took place on this question of irregularity, in which Mr. Bentley took his side. He endeavoured, in an artful manner, to draw the committee into an acknowledgment that the proceedings of the opposition, as it respected church meetings, had been irregular, intending thereby to destroy the force of their objections against the irregular proceedings of the parish, and intimated, though he did not undertake to assert, that though the parish had not in some instances been perfectly regular in the beginning, they had since corrected their proceedings and set themselves right. Among many other things equally incorrect and irrevelant to the subject, he said he should consider the call and answer perfectly regular if the opposers had not been consulted, as they had petitioned for a separation, and obtained the consent of the parish for that purpose, and were exempted from the

burden of parish expenses. This kind of sophistry had its effect on the minds of the council.

The committee having clearly proved, as they believe, the propriety of this objection, proceeded to the second: that Mr. Richardson was an unsuitable person in point of moral character to be employed in the gospel ministry. A number of charges of a more specific nature were contained under this head: 1st, That Mr. Richardson had been guilty of violating one of the most solemn contracts of social life, for which he stands condemned in a court of justice. 2d, That he had been guilty of base ingratitude, and created much disturbance, by divulging and misrepresenting a confidential communication made to him, at his request, by one who had patronised him, and conducted towards him in the most friendly manner. 3d, That he had avowed a principle inconsistent with the peace and happiness of civil society, viz. that if even in a confidential manner an opinion were given in his presence unfavourable to an absent person, he always considered himself at liberty to divulge it. 4th, That, independent of the foregoing instances, he had been guilty of deception, prevarication and falsehood. 5th, That he had, by his improper speeches and conduct, manifested an unguarded, petulant and quarrelsome disposition. 6th, That he had, by his acceptance, and residence here in an irregular and unprecedented manner, made himself an instrument to destroy the peace of the parish, and the happiness of individuals; and although the consequences were long since well known to him, he had manifested a determination still to remain here.

In support of the first charge, the committee, in addition to the judgment of court, produced a deposition which was not exhibited on the trial, from the Rev. Mr. Barton, of Fitchburg, testifying to the fact, and also two letters to Mr. Richardson from Miss Robinson, the lady who prosecuted him for a breach of promise of marriage, written after the receipt of his letter to her by which he broke off the connexion between them after five years courtship, but before the prosecution was commenced or contemplated. These letters bear internal marks of authenticity, and were sworn by her to be correct copies, to the best of her recollection. In the first of these she entreats him, in the feeling language of injured innocence, to give her some explanation of his strange and unexpected conduct. In the other (he having taken no notice of

the first) she reviews his conduct towards her, and recapitulates his solemn promises, oaths and imprecations. The evidence contained in these letters of the truth of the accusation against Mr. Richardson, and the collateral evidence in support of it, were, in the opinion of the committee, so explicit and conclusive, that it could be resisted by nothing but the most hardened prejudice, or determined blindness. Even Mr. Bentley seemed for a moment to be convinced of its truth; but justified Mr. Richardson's denial, on the ground, that as Mr. Richardson had appealed from the judgment of the inferior court, had thrown himself on God and his country, and the cause was then pending, he had a right to plead not guilty, and such a plea under such circumstances was never considered a falsehood; and further said, he thought it very extraordinary that a case which was then pending in a court of justice should be brought before that council to be prejudged by them. The committee would here remark, that if such reasoning be admitted as correct, the consequences would be incalculable. The indictment of a man for crimes of ever so heinous a nature must form no objection to his being introduced into the gospel ministry, lest the court before whom the criminal should afterwards be tried, might possibly be influenced by the opinion of an ordaining council.

Dr. Morse's evidence being necessary to prove the truth of the second accusation, and he not having arrived, it was accordingly postponed. At this stage of the business, it being about 10 o'clock, the council adjourned, and met again the next morning at about 7, when the third charge was brought forward, and supported by the testimony of Mr. Hoar, and was not denied by Mr. Richardson.

In support of the fourth, a number of circumstances were mentioned, which the committee believe went to substantiate the accusation. But the most striking instance which was produced was a statement in writing to the parish, at their meeting Dec. 10, 1805. Mr. Richardson's letter of defence (as it was called) which was read at that meeting, was called for by the committee, and an extract relative to his leaving the boarding-house of Mr. Adams in Charlestown was read by the council. Mr. Richardson therein stated, that the day after he left Mr. Adams's he called there on some business; that Mr. Adams then expressed his regret that Mr. Richardson had left him, and said the young gentlemen who boarded

with him were also sorry for what had happened, and wished him to return and overlook all that had taken place; that he did not return, because he had engaged other lodgings. A deposition was produced from Mr. Adams, testifying that he never made any declaration of the kind, but on the contrary he believed nothing but the most ample acknowledgments on the part of Mr. Richardson would have satisfied those gentlemen, and that his return without such acknowledgments would have been the signal for them to leave the house.

An affray which took place between Mr. Richardson and a gentleman in Charlestown, and several other facts, were adduced in support of the fifth charge. Mr. Adams, from Acton, asserted, that he was in company with Mr. Richardson at Concord a few months before he came to preach in this town; that Mr. Richardson then said something to this effect; that he had quitted preaching because he despised the clergy and the profession, and appeared to wish the company to understand that he was ashamed of ever having had any connexion with the clerical order. Mr. Richardson said he did not recollect ever to have said any such thing, or ever to have seen Mr. Adams before, and wished him to state the place and circumstances when this declaration was made. Mr. Adams accordingly stated the place, and circumstances, and persons present; all which Mr. Richardson remembered, but said it was a new charge, which he was not prepared to answer; but had he known it in season, he could have produced the persons who were present.

The sixth charge was considered self evident, and needed no proof.

The committee having gone through all the specific charges except that which required the testimony of Dr. Morse, who was momentarily expected, one of the council observed, that Mr. Bridge was present, and could give all the information on that subject that was necessary. Mr. Bridge then made a statement to this effect: that some time previous to the difficulty with Dr. Morse, Mr. Richardson and himself were accidentally in company with each other, when no other person was present; that some conversation took place which led Mr. Richardson to say, apparently without any malicious intention, and rather inadvertently, that he knew certain persons in Charlestown were not perfectly friendly to

Mr. Bridge ; and on his asking to what he alluded, Mr. Richardson, after some hesitation, told him, that he had been advised by Dr. Morse to avoid the company of Mr. Bridge, and others, and their families, and to seek that of some other persons, whom he named : that he, Mr. Bridge, feeling much injured, required an explanation of Dr. Morse, which was given him by the Doctor. Mr. Richardson then asked Mr. Bridge, in presence of the council, if Dr. Morse had not made some concessions to him. Mr. Bridge wished to be excused from answering any such questions, as the Doctor and himself were on friendly terms, and wished nothing should be said which might interrupt their friendship. The committee, conceiving this to be an ex-parte and inconclusive evidence, wished that Dr. Morse might be heard. The council said, as Dr. Morse had not arrived, and as there were no other evidences to be given, they wished to be a few minutes by themselves. The committee observed, they hoped the council would not adjourn, as they had many observations to make, as well as Dr. Morse's evidence to exhibit. The council replied, that they had not adjourned, but as they had been a considerable time in session, and felt somewhat exhausted, they wished to have a little respite, just to take breath ; intimating at the same time that the committee should be heard further. All present, except the council, accordingly retired. After the committee had waited some time, they began to suspect that there might be some misunderstanding between them and the council with regard to their being heard further, or that the council had determined to hear nothing more ; and handed in a written request that the ordination might be postponed until the fate of the petition for a separation should be known. Immediately after this a letter was received from the council of the opposition, containing their advice. Another written request, founded on this advice, was sent to the council, viz. that the ordination might be postponed until a mutual council should be called to investigate the whole subject, and determine on the expediency of Mr. Richardson's settlement in this place. To neither of these did the council return any answer, and in a short time it was proclaimed that the council would be in the meeting-house at half past twelve o'clock. Thus the committee were unexpectedly, and, as they conceived, unfairly, debarred from the privilege, which they understood had been implicitly promised them, of sup-

porting one of their most important charges, and making such observations on the whole subject as they deemed pertinent to the occasion. They believed the business was not closed, not only from the observations of the council, previous to their leaving the room, but from the circumstances of Mr. Richardson's not having made his defence, and the papers which they held as evidences not having been called for by the council; who appeared indifferent about their contents and about their authenticity. After the decision of the council, and just as they were separating, Dr. Morse's carriage drove up to the door, which was no later than half past 11 o'clock, A. M. It was remarked to them that Dr. Morse had arrived. Mr. Bentley said, "We cannot help that," and they immediately dispersed. The Doctor entered with two other evidences, Messrs. Rockwood and Goodwin, and the moderator of the council was sought for, and after some time found and introduced. Dr. Morse informed him that he had made great exertions to come here; that such was the feeble state of his health, nothing but business of the greatest importance would have induced him to undertake the journey; that he had come by the request of the opposers of Mr. Richardson, and in justice to his own character (it having been said he dare not appear) as well as to the cause of that religion he was solemnly bound to protect. He then made some pertinent remarks on the importance of the subject which engaged his present attention, and said he could prove, by such evidence as would be considered conclusive in a court of justice, that Mr. Richardson did not pay that regard to truth which a minister ought to do, and that he had avowed principles fatal to the peace of civil society, and that in one instance at least he had acted on those principles. The moderator said he would communicate the matter to the council. The Doctor waited a considerable time with the committee without hearing from him, and finally sent a billet in order that he might have an explicit answer whether he could be heard or not. No answer was given, and in a short time the procession set out for the meeting-house. This important evidence, which the committee believe would have fully convicted Mr. Richardson of the second charge before mentioned, they were prevented from bringing forward, under the frivolous pretence of a delay of time; as if such a consideration ought to be set against the introduction of an improper character into the gospel ministry.

It may be proper here to state, that while the council were in session, several clergymen of the neighbourhood repeatedly applied to be admitted as hearers, as is customary in similar cases, but were refused: also that the opposition, though excluded on Tuesday, were admitted on Wednesday, but not until it was a second time insisted on by the committee, and after it had been understood out of doors that they could not be admitted; so that but three or four persons, and those by mere accident, had an opportunity of availing themselves of the privilege.

Your committee have thus endeavoured to give a concise statement of the most material transactions which took place during this extraordinary business. It is impossible to give a just representation, on paper, of the behaviour of the council towards the committee, and the contemptuous light in which they appeared to view the opposition, as well as the serious charges which were exhibited. The committee forbear to express their feelings in language which the occasion would fully justify; but would only remark generally, that they believe, every charge which they brought forward against Mr. Richardson was completely substantiated, as ample evidence was adduced in support of them, and no documents, or evidence of any kind, to their knowledge, were produced to the council, which invalidated a single fact.

The moderator of the council, though he was careful to inform the congregation, when assembled in the meeting-house, that the council found nothing against Mr. Richardson to disqualify him for a gospel minister, was equally careful to avoid saying, that the allegations brought forward by the opposition were unsupported. The committee, therefore, after the opportunity they have had to make themselves acquainted with the facts relative to the subject, are irresistibly led to the conclusion, and feel it their duty to declare their belief, that these charges were entirely disregarded, and that Mr. Richardson was ordained by a partial council, selected for party purposes, and wholly under the influence of party considerations; and that the whole transaction is without a parallel in the ecclesiastical history of New England.

Benjamin Lincoln, Nathan Rice, Samuel Norton, Thomas Loring, Abner Lincoln, Levi Lincoln, Robert Thaxter, Jerom Cushing, William Cushing, Committee.

N. B. Ebenezer Gay, Esq. and Mr. Caleb Thaxter, were

of the committee, but from necessity were prevented from attending.

Hingham, July, 1806.

THE Rev. Mr. Norton, in conversation with a gentleman in Hingham, on the day of Mr. Richardson's ordination, having expressed a wish to obtain information on the subject in controversy, a copy of the foregoing report,* with sundry other documents, was some time after put into his hands by that gentleman. These documents occasioned the letter which we are now about to examine.

The respect we have entertained for this gentleman, occasions some unpleasant sensations in proceeding on this part of our duty: but, as he has consented to the publication of his letter, with an earnest desire that it may be instrumental in the developement of truth; and as those whose cause and character he has undertaken to advocate, place much reliance on his arguments for support, and consider them a complete refutation of the charges against Mr. Richardson, and that its publication would be an important favour conferred on the public; he will certainly pardon us for attempting to analyse

* The compilers of the "Vindication" say, "*a strange occurrence* threw this report into their hands." What this *strange occurrence* was, which so *wonderfully* threw this report into their hands, will appear, when it is known that the copy which they obtained *was handed them by Mr. Norton*. In justice, however, to that gentleman, we would exonerate him from any impropriety which their insinuation seems to attach to this part of his conduct, by stating, that the person from whom he received it gave him full liberty to communicate it to whom he pleased. We would also add, that the original was always open to the inspection of every one, with the liberty of taking as many copies as they pleased. The compilers seem to have a peculiar fondness for dealing in the marvellous, and representing themselves as under the guardian care of some propitious deity, who was always ready to *throw into their hands* any thing which might have a tendency to favour their cause, and defeat the designs of their opposers. An instance of this kind occurs in the 16th page of their pamphlet, where they state, that a vote of the opposition, expressing their intention to oppose the ordination of Mr. Richardson "*fell into their hands*." This intention of the opposition, which they so *fortunately* discovered by *intercepting* that document, as they pretend, was very well known to them, without any supernatural agency, or any very extraordinary accident, it having been the uniform declaration of the opposers, that they should use their exertions to prevent the ordination, unless an obligation should be signed by the other party not to oppose their act of incorporation. We believe the fact to be, that the compilers of the "Vindication" had been so much in the habit of conducting all their affairs in secret conclave, that they suspected the same conduct in their opposers.

it, and to show how far these several ends are answered by this production.

After an elaborate introduction, which with some other circumstances would incline us to believe it was originally intended for publication, had not the author declared to the contrary, Mr. Norton proceeds to state the leading considerations which influenced his mind in the case then before him.

The first is the result of Mr. Richardson's ordaining council. To Mr. N. it is utterly incredible that such a council should have been unanimous in deciding as they did, *had they believed that Mr. Richardson was an unworthy and unsuitable man to be inducted into the gospel ministry in the town of Hingham.* To us we confess it is "hardly credible." But that so small a body of men (and for aught we know very good men too, though perhaps not remarkable for their firmness, independence, or discernment) should be *misled* by the volubility of a designing individual, is not to us so incredible. That this was the case in the instance before us, we are firmly persuaded from what passed under our own immediate observation, notwithstanding Mr. N's *belief* to the contrary.

The second consideration is drawn from several documents testifying to the respectability of Mr. R's character, &c. Here the letter writer labors much to prove the truth of what was never denied. We never pretended that Mr. Richardson did not belong to the church at Dartmouth College, nor that Dr. Smith did not furnish him with the usual certificates and recommendations given to persons in his situation on leaving the college, nor that Dr. Cummings did not recommend him to Dr. Morse; that the selectmen and school committee of Charlestown had not a good opinion of him, nor that he did not often talk upon religious subjects with Deacon Goodwin. But what has all this to do with the *specific charges* brought against him by his opposers in Hingham? Miss Robinson, it is probable, would have said as much in his favour one hour before she was made acquainted with his infidelity to her, as all of them put together. All this kind of evidence, therefore, goes only to prove (if it proves any thing) that these gentlemen were deceived. As well might Gen. Arnold's friends plead his *bravery* at Quebec, in evidence that he was not a *traitor* at West-Point. We are told in sacred history that Absalom by his arts and address "stole the hearts of the men

of Israel." Now the Israelites must have been sadly degenerated and corrupted if there were not in this multitude which Absalom had won, many very good and respectable characters, and from whom there can hardly exist a doubt that he might have obtained *ample recommendations*. Some of them would probably have gone so far as to say "that if any illiberal surmises or dishonourable charges were hinted to his prejudice, they *believed* them to be wholly groundless." We think it *morally certain* that this was the case. But Mr. N. would think we did not treat the Bible with the respect which is due, did we conclude from this that Absalom was not a rebellious son.

After enumerating the documents above alluded to, and expressing his confidence in the same, Mr. N. proceeds to examine the report of the committee; but first lays down the following premises or principles by which to be governed in judging of the opinions and statements therein contained, viz. "Such is the moral constitution or organization of man, as to render him extremely liable to view objects, and especially under certain circumstances, through a false and deceptive medium, and to give them a correspondent description."

Although Mr. N. disclaims any such intention, we find him applying these remarks almost exclusively to the committee and their witnesses.

From these premises Mr. N. is led to observe, that he cannot easily persuade himself to admit, &c. Here he quotes the most prominent parts of the report relative to the council, and then very charitably supposes that, although he does not believe what the committee have stated, they were not guilty of *designed* misrepresentations, but "that the imperfections, inseparable from human nature, had some secret influence in biassing their minds and directing the pen." A great stretch of charity indeed! At this distant period, however, when the "deceptive medium" which then obscured their mental vision, and the mists of prejudice which oppressed their minds, might be supposed in some measure to have evaporated, their views are still the same, and their opinion remains unaltered.

Mr. N. cannot believe that the gentlemen criminated by the declarations and charges in the report, are so devoid of the principles of integrity and religion, as to conduct in the manner represented. But why should not the same premises which led him to believe the committee had not told the

truth, also lead him to believe that these gentlemen might unconsciously be in *some degree* under the secret influence of the imperfection inseparable from human nature ? We by no means suppose, with Mr. N. that if the truth of the statements in the report are admitted, the necessary conclusion is, that all the members of the council are devoid of the principles of integrity and religion ; and we think in this we have his own reasoning for our support.

In the statements made in the report relative to Mr. Richardson's call and answer of acceptance, there is no error of consequence ; but as Mr. N. does not consider this matter of much importance, he does not appear to have made up his mind respecting its truth : we will therefore add nothing on this subject.

Mr. N. then proceeds to examine the charges of a specific nature, but he proceeds apparently under a very wrong impression. We could not have believed, had not the gentleman himself told us so, that he could have supposed it was the intention of the committee to state every particular evidence or testimony which they produced to the council in support of their charges, when the report was made to those who were already acquainted with most of them, and when he finds that in support of one of the charges, "no specific testimony" is stated. Could he suppose the committee were so weak as to bring forward a charge against Mr. R. when they knew they had nothing to support it ? or, having done this, that they were so stupid as to *believe* it was *completely substantiated* ? If not, it was trifling with common sense, to say that the existence of *any* evidence in support of a charge was *problematical*, and at the same time that he did not think the committee made a *designed* misrepresentation when they declared they believed such a charge was *completely substantiated*.

In support of the first charge, the committee have referred to the decision of court as one evidence. This decision Mr. N. is led to believe incorrect and injurious ; partly from the declaration of Mr. Richardson's counsel, and partly from such documents (which he is not at liberty to mention in relation to their source) as explicitly and solemnly declare that Mr. Richardson never made any promise of marriage, &c. After examining the evidences on both sides of the question in this case, the writer concludes that the testimony in favour of the

accused is equally strong as against him. But we would invite the gentleman to look over this evidence again, and see whether his conclusion is correct. In the first place, there is the opinion of Mr. Richardson's council on one side, and we have no doubt that of Miss Robinson's might have been obtained to balance it ; but as it was not, we will set the Rev. Mr. Barton's testimony against it, an essential part of which Mr. Norton has omitted. This we think ought to preponderate, but we will call it even. Then there is the *secret* evidence, which, though Mr. Norton is not at liberty to mention in relation to its source, every one will perceive could come from no one but Mr. Richardson himself ; for who could know that he never made any promise of marriage, &c. except himself and Miss Robinson ? and she declares he did. Now Mr. Richardson was certainly a very interested person ; his veracity also stood impeached. For these reasons therefore, and for other reasons, which may be found under the head of our remarks on Mr. Bentley's letter, we contend that the declarations of Miss Robinson ought to have much more weight than those of Mr. Richardson ; but for the sake of accommodation in the argument we will set one against the other : thus we have all the testimony which Mr. Norton mentioned in favour of the accused, and the scales are adjusted. Now we have the unanimous opinion of twelve impartial men, under oath, to whom the case was referred, and by whom both parties were heard. This opinion has been confirmed, before the publication of Mr. N's. letter, by twelve other impartial men, also under oath, and by whom both parties were also heard. This we have to throw into the scale against the accused, which we think even Mr. N. himself will not hesitate to acknowledge must decidedly preponderate.

Mr. N. objects to Miss Robinson's letter as manifesting a want of delicacy, &c. Had not the writer exhausted all his charity on less worthy objects, we should have supposed, from his known benevolence, he might have found some apology for the severity of her language, in the abruptness with which a long and strong attachment was broken, and the suddenness and severity of her disappointment.

In regard to the second charge, Mr. N. after recapitulating what is said about it in the report, from which it appears that no evidence in support of it was adduced, in a triumphant

manner inquires, "Why then do the committee say that they believe *every charge* which they brought forward was completely substantiated, &c." We would not accuse the gentleman of a want of candour, when he professes so much of it; but surely a little attention to the report must have convinced him that the committee did not consider this as one of the charges *brought forward* by them. They expressly say it was *postponed*. The statement afterwards made by Mr. Bridge was made at the request of the other party, and his relation of facts, as far as it goes, certainly gives support to the charge. Mr. Bridge testified that Mr. Richardson *did* divulge a communication; which from its nature must have been confidential: it remained to be proved by Dr. Morse and others that this act was premeditated, and that the communication was misrepresented.

The third charge Mr. N. considers unsubstantiated, because it was not attested by two or three witnesses. We confess we supposed that if a fact was attested by a credible witness, and was tacitly admitted by the person accused, it would be considered as fully substantiated. If this were not sufficient, however, Dr. Morse, Mr. Rockwood and Mr. E. Goodwin, had they been permitted, would have testified to the same, and then we should have had *three or four* witnesses. But if it had been *thus* substantiated, Mr. N. does not admit that the principle which Mr. Richardson avowed was a dangerous one, because cases may exist in which a person would be justified, and it would even be his duty, to divulge a confidential communication. But because a person is justified in acting on such a principle in particular cases, does it follow that he is justified in making it a general principle of action? This appears to have been the case with Mr. Richardson, although Mr. N. with his usual charity, supposes he had some *mental reservation*.

Under the head of the fourth charge is noticed the testimony of Mr. Adams of Charlestown, which, though given under oath by a disinterested person, the writer considers as entitled to no more weight than Mr. R's declaration to the contrary! In support of the fifth charge Mr. N. says no evidence is stated, and thence concludes that none exists. We have already made a sufficient explanation in relation to this circumstance, which we should have really supposed the gentleman might have anticipated.

The assertion of Mr. Adams of Acton, the writer supposes was not *wilfully* incorrect, but that it was *unhappily* so. It is truly singular that a man of common understanding should be so totally mistaken in the *expressions* and *design* of another, as to believe he wished to *impress* on the minds of a company any particular sentiment, when in fact he had no such intention, but would rather have wished the reverse ; and how Mr. N. can *satisfy his own mind* as he does, when he appears to have nothing but the testimony or declarations of an accused person on which to found his opinion, is no less singular.

The sixth charge the committee have said was self-evident, and needed no proof. Mr. N. asks, What was self-evident ? We answer, that certain facts arose to the view of the council, in the course of the discussion, which the committee believed went to support this charge. It was *evident* to the council, without its being particularly stated to them by the committee, that a considerable opposition to the settlement of Mr. R. existed in the parish, from the circumstance of a committee being admitted to state their objections, and from a protest in their possession, with about fifty signatures. It was *evident*, from what appeared on investigating the subject, independently of this charge, that in Mr. R's call and acceptance, the established customs were disregarded, and improper innovations introduced ; and that a subsequent call and acceptance, or perhaps more properly a civil contract between the parish and Mr. R. was totally unprecedented ; and had the council indulged a little reflection on the subject, it must we think have appeared *evident* to them that much unhappiness was the natural consequence of these things, and that Mr. R. was an instrument in promoting it, and that he could not have resided in the parish so long without knowing these consequences. It was also *evident*, from the circumstance of a council being called for the ordination, that he was determined to remain in the parish, notwithstanding the consequences. It was the intention of the committee to have remarked on this charge in conclusion of the business, had they been admitted into the council chamber after they retired with such an expectation ; but as they were not, it was not *brought forward* to the council.

Mr. N. has laboured through sixteen pages, to say what appears to us to amount to little more than this, that he be-

believes the committee and the witnesses they produced were entirely mistaken, but that Mr. R. in his statements is perfectly correct. If we have placed wrong constructions on any part of his letter, or have been uncandid in our remarks, we hope he will forgive us, and exercise his usual charity for our imperfections.

Having noticed Mr. N's. reasoning on the contents of the report, it may not be improper to state some circumstances relative to his conduct in this business, for which we will not undertake to account. In the introduction, as an apology for addressing his letter to Col. Rice, he observes, that he had received sundry documents, which he supposed were communicated by him, although they were delivered by another hand. We are authorised to say that Mr. N. was informed, long before the publication of his letter, that Col. Rice had no agency whatever in the business, but that those documents were furnished him in consequence of a wish to see them, some time before expressed by him to the person who furnished them. Yet Mr. N. suffers his letter to be published in its original form, without noticing this circumstance. He may consider this a trifling circumstance ; but when he considers that any correspondence or conversation with clergymen, by the opposers of Mr. Richardson, is immediately construed by his adherents into an attempt to deceive them, and prevent intercourse between them and him ; and the persecution which is the consequence of such suspicions ; he will not perhaps think it so trifling. We are also authorised to say, that Mr. N. was at the same time informed that it was not the intention of the committee to state in their report every evidence they exhibited to the council, but that they had proofs and documents in their possession, in addition to those stated, which he might examine ; and that they could probably satisfy him that every thing contained in their report was correct. This Mr. N. could not consider very trifling ; yet, though he has several times since been in Hingham, he has never taken the trouble to call on any of the committee to inquire for truth, nor has he noticed this circumstance, when consenting to the publication of his letter. Mr. N. undoubtedly has his reasons for all this, but it is not incumbent on us to account for his conduct, or to develope his motives. If Mr. Richardson has address enough to lead Mr. N. to believe that his religious tenets are correspondent to his own, and at the

same time persuade the people of his parish, that he subscribes to theirs, however different from those of Mr. Norton, we leave them both in the quiet enjoyment of the benefits of his ingenuity.

Having shewn, as we believe, that Mr. N's reasoning is not very forcible, his arguments not very cogent, and his conclusions not very correct, we leave him to justify his motives to his own conscience, and proceed to a more difficult part of our subject. The Rev. Mr. Bentley next claims our attention.

Had some courteous friend, better versed in the Bentleian language than ourselves, kindly furnished us with a *translation* of his letter, we might perhaps have proceeded with as much ease in this, as in any part of the business we have undertaken. We will attempt however, to select from his string of enigmas some passages, the meaning of which, with the help of a little *guess work*, we may possibly be able to discover.

The first thing which attracts our notice is, an insinuation that the committee of the opposition refused their papers to the council. "That men who refused to trust their papers for one night with a council, should pretend that they were not heard, were neglected, were treated with contempt, is indeed extraordinary." However extraordinary this may appear to Mr. B. to others, who know that gentleman, we presume it will appear highly probable, that the conduct of the council under his controul might have been such as to prove they were not trust-worthy, and justify a refusal of the papers, as well as a subsequent complaint of contemptuous treatment. But, however unworthy of confidence the council might appear to the committee, *the papers were not refused*.*

As Mr. B's. insinuation is in direct contradiction to what is contained in the report, it was incumbent on him to state what papers were refused, and all the circumstances attending the refusal, that his insinuation might carry with it some evidence of truth. He found it, however, much easier to contradict than to prove. As the refusal of papers is several

* In the course of the discussion, some of the papers were laid on the council's table, and one of them remained in their hands, which was actually carried to Salem by Mr. Bentley, and was not obtained until application was made by letter some weeks afterwards.

times noticed in the "Vindication," we will make a statement relative to this subject. On the afternoon previous to the day of the ordination, the committee appeared before the council, and when the reading of papers was commenced, the moderator inquired if those papers were to be given up for their inspection : to which it was replied, that when the committee had gone through with the investigation, the papers should all be given up to them. The person reading them then proceeded, and nothing more was said on that subject until some time in the evening ; when one of the committee was making some remarks on the charge against Mr. Richardson of a breach of promise of marriage. To assist his memory, he had made some minutes in writing, among which were a number of quotations from Mr. Richardson's letters to Miss Robinson. When these were read, Mr. Bentley inquired if the committee had not the letters ; observing, that these extracts might be very partial, and so connected in the original letters as to give them a very different complexion. He was answered by the gentleman, that the committee had copies of those letters, which they intended to read, but that these extracts were read at that time merely to illustrate the observations he was making. Mr. Richardson then rose, and said, he should object to any copies of letters being read. It was then asked by one of the council, if the committee had not the originals. They were answered in the affirmative, but that copies were taken to prevent the necessity of using the originals, which were much worn, and would be wanted at the trial of the case they affected, at the Supreme Court. "Have you the originals?" said Mr. Richardson : "I should like to see them." "They are at the service of the council, said the gentleman speaking, who may compare them with the copies, and return them, if the copies are correct, but may keep the latter." The letters were then produced by another of the committee, who was about to hand them to the person speaking, when the moderator asked if the letters contained any thing which went to prove the fact in question, which was not contained in the extracts. He was answered, that the extracts which had been read, and some other passages of similar import, were all they contained to the point. He then said he saw no necessity of spending time to read them. "No," said Mr. Bentley, if that is the case, there is no need of spending time to read them." The letters were then put up again,

and the committee were requested by the council to proceed. Nothing more was said, then or at any time after, either on that evening or the next day, about papers being given up. Should it be asked, why they were not delivered to the council without any further application on their part, we refer to the report of the committee for a satisfactory answer.*

"The committee complain, says Mr. B. that one of the council was father in law to Mr. Richardson, &c." They have indeed stated this fact, but have left every person to make his own comments. Mr. B. undertakes to justify this by the authority of common usage; which seems to be for candidates to "invite their dearest friends" to assist at their ordination. Why then, we in our turn would ask, were Messrs. Barker, Bentley and Briggs invited? Was it because they were the "dear friends" of Mr. Richardson? or was it because they had any immediate connexion with the church in Hingham? or because they agreed with the church, or the candidate, or with each other, in theological sentiments? Or was it for party purposes?

But, however proper and laudable it may be, on ordinary occasions, where unanimity prevails, to invite the friends of the candidate to assist at his ordination, and to rejoice with him, and the church and congregation committed to his pastoral care, on a pleasing and solemn event, yet where there exists a formidable opposition against him, on account of serious charges against his moral character, we conceive he ought to be tried by persons as free as possible from any kind of prejudice; by men who possess firmness and independence, as well as principle.

Mr. B. says, "What shall we think of a report which begins in such a manner, complains of the common usages of churches, and then dares to say, in the conclusion, that the most regular proceedings are contrary to the usages of the New England churches? All this we deny: the report says no such thing; and we challenge the ingenuity of Mr. B. to prove that it does.

* Here we are sensible our testimony stands opposed to that of a number of our fellow townsmen, as well as to Mr. Bentley's. We appeal, however, to every impartial person to decide who are entitled to the most credit, those who had the power of conducting matters as they pleased, yet secluded themselves in a corner, where but few could be witnesses of their proceedings, or those who courted public inspection, but were not able to obtain it.

"The council," he says, "had no improper conference with the committee" [of the parish.] Where then did he get his incorrect information that there were so *few* of the opposition, that the place in which the council was assembled was sufficiently spacious to accommodate them all? and that they paid no part of the parish expenses? We conceive that any conference with either committee, when the other was not present, was improper; because incorrect statements might be made without contradiction, and a wrong bias given to the minds of the council. If any statements were made, or any documents produced to the council, by the committee of the parish, it was done previous to our attendance; whereas every thing of the kind done on our part was in their presence.

Passing over a jumble of words, which require no animadversion, as we are obliged to do in many instances, we come to the following: "But they [the committee] go on and say, that the council was determined not to admit any charges not contained in the protest, and then concede that other charges were heard. How then could they be sure of such determination?" This Mr. B. calls a contradiction. But we see no natural impossibility in the council's being induced to change their determination, and no *contradiction* in saying they did. The committee, however, did *not* say that such was the determination of the council; they merely stated their opinion.

Mr. B. says, the usages in the Presbyterian church require that an accused person shall be allowed at least ten days to make his defence. This is said in allusion to the fact to which Mr. Adams of Acton testified. This fact was one, among many others, which Mr. Richardson's opposers had heard by report. These reports were many of them so well authenticated as to leave no doubt on their minds of their truth, but were not, under existing circumstances, susceptible of positive proof, the time which elapsed between the appointment of the ordination, and its consummation, being so short as to render it impossible to obtain from distant places all the evidence which a longer time would have enabled them to procure. The committee did not know that they should be able to produce any evidence of the charge above alluded to, until they heard that Mr. Adams was in town; and his being here was rather an accidental circumstance, of which they were not previously apprised. Indeed, though they had frequently heard of Mr. Richardson's having spoken disrespectfully of the clergy, and

ridiculed the profession, at different times and places, they had not heard of this particular instance until Mr. Adams's arrival, and they thought it perfectly proper to avail themselves of his presence to substantiate the accusation. It therefore rested with the council to allow Mr. R. the necessary time to produce the evidence of his innocence.

Mr. B. next comes to the conduct of the council. The reasons he assigns for their refusal to comply with the request of the committee, by adjourning to the meeting-house, were, that it would occasion unnecessary delays, and that the place in which they were assembled would accommodate all interested persons. The first was undoubtedly a great objection in the mind of Mr. B. who appeared to be anxious to accomplish the object of his visit with all possible dispatch, and to "make short work of it." But when he said that all persons, interested in the settlement of a minister, in a parish containing upwards of three hundred families, could be accommodated in a room sixteen by thirty feet, he surely could not expect that many people would be so credulous as to believe it. *He says, "All such interested persons were permitted to enter."* *We assert, on the contrary, that two persons were stationed at the door to prevent interested persons from entering.* *He says, "It was a just and necessary inquiry, whether the place could receive the opposers ; and the council was convinced that they might be well accommodated."* *We say, no such inquiry was made of the committee of the opposers, and if the council were convinced of that fact, they were convinced of what was not true.* *He says, "If any measures were adopted to prevent such an accommodation as was provided by the council, such measures should have been reported to the council, and not have been made a subject of complaint after the council was dissolved."* *We say, it was reported to the council, and, by considerable exertion on the part of the committee, instructions were finally given to the constables stationed to guard the door, to admit the opposers ; but, as has been before stated, it was at so late an hour that it was of very little consequence. It is not much to be wondered at, however, that a man who was so intent on the main object, the ordination, (for we believe it rarely happens that Mr. B. has an opportunity of figuring at an ordination) and so regardless of every thing else, should, six months afterwards, be ignorant of many things which took place, and*

in making a statement of them, be guilty of gross misrepresentation.

The next glaring mistatement in Mr. B's letter is, "that the committee proposed to unite the ex-parte council with the ordaining council ; and by neglecting to state that fact, the whole business," he says, "is misrepresented." So far from this being true, it was expressly stated by the person who made the proposal for their admission into the council chamber, that the committee did not expect this council to have any voice or influence in the ordination, but only wished they might be admitted to hear the merits of the subject, that they might be qualified to advise the opposition. One of the council said, on this subject, "they had no notion of having a jury upon their conduct." This excludes the idea of uniting the two councils. Why men who are acting with conscious integrity should be unwilling to have witnesses to their conduct, we cannot tell.

Mr. B. says, "The committee attempted to discourage the examination of the witnesses." What he builds this assertion upon, we cannot conjecture. We know that no such attempts were made, and we think few people will be so simple as to believe that any man, or set of men, would attempt to discourage the examination of witnesses whom they had brought forward to support the allegations they themselves had made.

"Such a disposition," says he "was discovered to overwhelm a young man by the worst construction of all his actions, as must have alarmed every upright man." It is truly laughable that Mr. Bentley should talk of being alarmed at such a disposition. As this assertion, however, like many others in his letter, is unsupported by evidence, we will hazard our own in opposition to it ; that no disposition was discovered to place a worse construction on Mr. Richardson's actions, than facts would justify, and every upright man, who had a correct view of those facts, fully approve.

Mr. B. next comes (as he says) "to the examination, and the first regards a supposed promise of marriage. The state of facts appears to be, that the opposers had sent to Dr. Cummings, in whose house Mr. Richardson lived when the affair happened, for his judgment on the matter ; and he wrote, that, as far as it was known to him, it was a venial offence, &c. and afterwards he gave him an ample recom-

commendation." Mr. B. has here attempted to divert the attention of his reader from the material *facts*, by introducing some circumstances under the imposing name of *the state of facts*, which do not in the least affect the merits of the case, and, to give the imposition the greater weight, has annexed the name of Dr. Cummings, by pretending to quote from the Doctor's letter a passage or sentiment which it does not contain. The *real state of facts* may be much better known by application to the records of the inferior court at Concord, or the Supreme Judicial Court at Cambridge, than from Mr. B's letter. The passage, "*he afterwards gave him an ample recommendation,*" stands so connected in that letter, as to lead the reader to believe (if he believed Mr. Bentley) that the "ample recommendation" was given by Dr. Cummings after the application of the opposers before mentioned. This is not true. So far from it, the Doctor says, in the letter from which Mr. B. pretends to quote, "that some of the reports in circulation respecting Mr. Richardson, are so circumstanced as to lay a foundation to suspect that *all is not right*; and that the impressions of such a suspicion *may reasonably restrain him from recommending* without further inquiry." If Mr. B. means that this "ample recommendation" was given after the young lady was discarded, he is correct; but it was before the circumstances of the affair were publicly known, and when Dr. Cummings probably knew nothing of them except from Mr. Richardson himself.

"The attorney at law," says Mr. B. "was sent to after the action against Mr. R. issued, and he wrote most expressly that nothing criminal had appeared." It ought here to be known, that although the action had issued at the inferior court, the cause was still pending, on an appeal, at the supreme court, and that this same attorney was engaged by Mr. Richardson, to make the best of it. That an attorney, under such circumstances, should say that nothing criminal had appeared in the conduct of his client, must indeed be "confirmation, strong as proof from holy writ," of his innocence.

The letter writer proceeds: "The method adopted to excite prejudice was taken from the judgment of court. Nothing was said of a possible charge against the innocent; nothing of the nature of many civil actions, which admit a good general character, nothing of the influence which could

be used after disappointment, for particular ends, and nothing of the true grounds of separation." What, we would ask, should have been said on these subjects? who should have said it? and who neglected to say it? This passage, if it has any meaning, is one of those knotty ones, which a person less skillful than Mr. B. we presume would be unable to unravel. We strongly suspect that if *he* were to attempt an explanation, he would but involve it in tenfold obscurity. We will therefore, in despair of even making a satisfactory *guess* at the author's meaning, pass it over, and proceed with the examination.

"The reporter, *therefore*, he says, [that is, because somebody neglected to say something about we cannot tell what] chose to go on, and by producing, as of great importance, letters from the memory of the accuser, of which the accused denied ever having seen the originals, confirmed the council that nothing could be safely inferred against the general character of Mr. Richardson," &c. The council, it seems, had some *doubts* whether Mr. Richardson's character was perfectly correct, until the committee entirely removed them by producing these letters, which *confirmed* them *that nothing could be inferred against it*. This we confess is something novel, that documents accusing a person of infidelity and falsehood, and from one who had felt the effects of this conduct, should be received by his judges as proof positive that nothing could be inferred against him. Yet such, according to appearances at the time of the ordination, and according to Mr. B's letter, was the fact.

"And therefore," says the letter, "the council proceeded upon the judgment already given, and not upon any review which might be taken, as this fact [the breach of promise] was before, but the action after, the approbation given by the Andover Association." By the *judgment already given*, seems to be intended, the approbation of the Andover Association, which, as Mr. B. says, was *before* the civil action; and it was *before* the transactions on which the other charges against Mr. Richardson were founded; and yet the council, he tells us, proceeded upon this judgment. The writer has here, we think, though perhaps unintentionally, acknowledged that the committee were correct in an opinion stated in their report, "that the council had predetermined to disregard every objection which should be made to Mr. R's character."

He has here declared, we must repeat it, that they proceeded upon the judgment given when Mr. R's character had not been called in question, and not upon any review which might be taken of his subsequent misconduct.

"Of what nature," Mr. B. asks, "are recollected letters?" These letters, which he calls "*recollected letters*," were not copied from memory, as one would suppose from the expression, but were copied from the originals, previous to their being sent to the persons to whom they were addressed. When the writer was applied to for these copies, not having the originals to compare them, she could only make oath that the copies were correct *according to the best of her recollection*. This she did, and this we believe would have satisfied any *reasonable* person, that they were sufficiently correct, should no question arise respecting her veracity. To remove any doubts on this point, we have the testimony of a number of the most respectable gentlemen in Westford, among whom are the selectmen, "that they are acquainted with Miss Robinson [the writer of those letters] and that she has ever sustained a strictly virtuous reputation." Mr. Bentley lays much stress upon the recommendation of Mr. Richardson from the selectmen of Charlestown, and we see no reason why the selectmen of Westford are not entitled to equal credit. The oath of a person whose character is thus established, and *whose veracity has never been called in question*, we consider sufficient to prove the truth of any fact of the nature of that to which she has sworn. We therefore consider it sufficiently proved that Miss Robinson did write two letters to Mr. Richardson, of which those exhibited to the council were correct copies. Whether Mr. R. received these letters, or not, does not at all affect their contents. The probability is, that he did, as she would undoubtedly entrust them to some careful hand to deliver. To determine the "nature" of these letters, and the weight they ought to have as evidence of the fact of which Mr. Richardson is accused, it is necessary to ascertain when they were written—under what circumstances—what was the object of the writer—and what were their contents.

These letters were written after the receipt of his letter requesting her to "place no more confidence in him," but before a prosecution was commenced, or probably thought of. The first of these contains the most earnest so-

licitations for an interview, that some explanation might be made on his part, of his unexpected conduct, and that, if they *must* part, it might be in peace and harmony. After repeating these solicitations, both by verbal message and in writing, without success—despairing of accomplishing her object, and feeling a just indignation for his treatment of her, she adopted that mode of proceeding which to every one must appear justifiable: in her last letter she placed before him a picture of his own conduct, and reproached him in the severest terms for his infidelity and falsehood. The object at which she was aiming could be accomplished by nothing but by telling him the truth, for truth only could excite compunction and remorse in his breast; and therefore truth only could answer her purpose. To our minds, therefore, they carry much conviction, and, with the other facts and circumstances connected with the affair, are ample evidence of his guilt.

“In regard to the principle said to be justified by Mr. Richardson,” says Mr. B. “it appeared that it was forced from him in a state of unavoidable irritation, and in justification of his conduct.” The principle here alluded to is, that he was at liberty to divulge confidential communications. That Mr. Richardson made such an avowal, Mr. B. admits, and we believe no one denies. Now Mr. Richardson avowed a principle which either was or was not his own. If it was his own, very few will deny that he is a dangerous man in society, especially as it seems (by its being forced from him) he meant to have concealed it, and only to have acted upon it as occasion might require. If it was not his own, then he had recourse to falsehood to vindicate conduct, which, it would seem, could not be vindicated by truth. In this alternative we leave Mr. Richardson to his choice.

Mr. B. says, “The letter in which Dr. Morse communicated *this affair*” (meaning, as we *guess*, the affair in which the Doctor was implicated) “could not be obtained by the council.” Dr. Morse never communicated this affair in a letter. He made a *verbal* statement to some individuals of Mr. Richardson’s adherents, as well as his opposers, and had given his opinion in writing, that for reasons thus stated M. Richardson was an unsuitable man in point of moral character to be employed in the gospel ministry. He had also stated in writing the terms on which Mr. Richardson stood with his

church respecting communion, but preferred appearing *personally* before the council to make a statement of the *affair* above alluded to. The documents above mentioned would have been exhibited at the proper time, had the committee been suffered to bring forward the affair to which they related, after Dr. Morse's arrival.

In speaking of the charge against Mr. Richardson of having made a false statement (respecting Mr. Adams of Charlestown) in his letter of defence to the parish, Mr. B. supposes he was amply vindicated from a *designed* misrepresentation, because Mr. Adams and Mr. Hoar testified, that a year or two before this statement was made, and previous to the difficulty which occasioned their separation, his treatment of them was unquestionably good!! The reader, we presume, will not hesitate much in forming his opinion of a man who will reason thus, and of a cause and character which have no better support than such a man and such reasoning.

"As to the new charge," says the letter writer, (of a contemptuous opinion of his profession) "it was denied by Mr. Richardson." Here we must again contradict this reverend gentleman. Mr. R. did not deny it. In support of this we appeal to his own statement, in a note, in the 39th page of the "Vindication." He merely said, he did not *recollect* ever to have *expressed* such an opinion. We conceive that a candidate for the ministry ought to be able to do something more than this—that he ought to be able absolutely to deny such a charge. An apprehension, however, that other evidence could be obtained in support of it, we presume forbade his doing this, and his not doing it we think may fairly be construed into a consciousness, that he had the disposition, and very probably did express the opinion ascribed to him by Mr. Adams.

"The sixth charge," Mr. B. says, "may arise against every candidate in towns where divisions arise. But because there is a division in a place respecting a candidate for the ministry, does it follow that he is justified in accepting an irregular and improper call, and residing in the place under circumstances of an unprecedented nature? for Mr. R. not only gave his answer in the affirmative to a call from the parish without the concurrence of the church, but he afterwards entered into a *civil contract* to become their public teacher of religion until he should be ordained, or until his

opposers consented to certain propositions ; and this, too, knowing the division and unhappiness which it occasioned, not only in the parish, but in private families, and among friends and connexions. Mr. R's opposers conceived, that in suffering himself to be imposed on so many who disliked him, and especially in the manner he had done, he manifested a disposition very incompatible with that love of peace and harmony and usefulness, which a minister of the gospel ought to enforce by his example as well as his teaching. Nor was this sentiment confined to his opposers, nor to the parish. Many people, who had not perhaps so full a knowledge of facts as those who had been uniform in their opposition, or did not view them in the same light, considered the call a touchstone by which to try his character, and his acceptance an evidence that it was not good ; and voted for him, that he might, as they thought, go off with honour ; but deprecated his acceptance as a measure highly improper on his part, and dangerous to the union of the parish. Some of them, however, considered themselves pledged by their vote and other proceedings, and did not withdraw. Some others, who have since joined those who were his first opposers, considered themselves absolved from any obligations to support him, by the subsequent irregular proceedings of him and the parish.*

“ As his character,” says Mr. B. “ had been violently attacked in Hingham, his presence was necessary to repel it.” It had been attacked in no other way than by a statement of facts, which he has never been able to invalidate, except by his own assertions, notwithstanding his *presence* for that purpose.

“ To retreat was death.” The writer could not mean a natural death ; he must have meant death to his hopes of a settlement in the ministry. We shall not contest this question with Mr. B. but leave it to be settled by him and Mr.

* Admitting, what we are confident will be readily admitted by all except the adherents of Mr. R. that the meeting of the First Church on the 9th of January 1806 was a *legal* meeting ; what becomes of the *legality* of Mr. R's Ordination ? At that meeting the church “ voted to nonconcur the doings of the parish in the call of Mr. R. and protest against the same.” This vote was never *reconsidered* by any subsequent vote, but still stands *fair* and *uncontradicted* on the records of the First Church ; and it was not till many months after that ordination, that the opposers waved their right of precedency.

Yet Mr. Bentley and others pretended to ordain Mr. R. over the First Church in Hingham.

Richardson's adherents, who are not very highly complimented in being told, as we conceive they are in effect, that a majority of persons could not be found in any other parish who would consent to have a man of Mr. R's character for their gospel minister.

"It must be considered a strange misrepresentation," continues our author, "that the reporters said they had more observations to make, and that men who withdrew with their papers, believed they were to have another hearing, when they had nothing to say." It is not pretended that any papers were requested immediately previous to the committee's retiring; and the circumstance of their withdrawing with their papers is a strong evidence that they expected to be heard again. Is it not customary, in all courts, civil and ecclesiastical, after the examination of witnesses, to take a general view of the subject, and make such observations and comments as naturally occur, and then to give up all papers? This was the course which the committee stated in the opening of the business they wished to pursue. But this was not permitted by the council. The question was asked by the council, Have you any other charge to offer? and they were answered, None, except that in which Dr. Morse's evidence is necessary.* The council replied, as Dr. Morse had not arrived, they wished to be by themselves a few minutes. The committee inquired if they intended to adjourn. They answered, that they were somewhat exhausted, and wished to take a little fresh air, or something to that effect. Under these circumstances had not the committee good ground to believe they should be heard again, especially if Dr. Morse should arrive, and that the council would wait a reasonable time for the Doctor? But instead of this, did not Mr. B. immediately after the council found themselves alone, ask the question, "Shall we wait for Dr. Morse?" and immediately reply to his own question, "No, I would sooner wait for the meanest wretch in creation." We ask Mr. B. and the other members of the council, if this was not the fact? Any candid person, who reflects on these circumstances, can-

* The committee in this reply alluded only to charges which required evidence not already in possession of the council. The sixth charge, which had not been brought forward, they intended to embrace in their concluding remarks, in review of the subject, and of the general character and conduct of Mr. Richardson, independently of the other charges.

not be surprised that the committee should think, as some of them actually did think at that time, that they were literally *tricked* out of a further hearing.

"It is true," says Mr. B. "the council received repeated notices, as the report says ; but as they were without dates or signatures, they were not entitled to regard." This is a most miserable subterfuge, under which the writer would shelter himself from an imputation of a breach of common civility, as if there could be any doubts in his mind, that the notes which were written in the name of a committee who were waiting in the next room for admission, and which were handed to the council by the person stationed to guard the door, were really genuine, because they were without *dates* or *signatures*.

"As to Dr. Morse's arrival," continues Mr. B. "after these transactions, &c. it can have no weight with any man who considers the nature of the council." We believe that any man, "who considers the nature of the council," of what it was composed, and by whom it was governed, will hardly suspect Dr. Morse would have been admitted, if it were possible to prevent it.

"What Dr. Morse had said," continues he, "the council did not hear, and the moderator had no information which he thought himself bound to communicate." We reply, the moderator had verbal information, which he *promised* to communicate ; and a written request that Dr. M. might be heard, was *dated* and *signed*, and handed in to the council.

Mr. B. says, "that ministers applied for admission, independently of the ex-parte council, was not made known to the council." It is certainly a miserable excuse, that the council did not know this, when they knew that orders were given to the door-keeper to exclude all persons who had not special permission to enter ; and when they were more than once informed that ministers wished to be admitted, but were excluded ; and we believe the names of some who did not belong to the ex-parte council were mentioned.

Mr. B. having noticed what he thought proper in the report, and made such statements as he thought proper relative to the ordination, makes some general observations on the character of Mr. Richardson. "Few people," he says, "are able to produce such ample testimony of the invariable goodness of their lives as Mr. R." This he mentions in substance three times in the compass of eight lines, as if he were appre-

hensive (as we have no doubt he was, and very justly) that nobody would believe him. He then takes a view of the several recommendations which Mr. Richardson had received, of which it is needless for us to take particular notice, as most of them were given prior to the date of the facts on which the accusations were founded, and none of them go directly to invalidate any of the charges. They are mere evidences of the good opinion of the writers; and those who were in the habit of thinking and judging for themselves did not feel bound by the opinion of others (most of whom they knew nothing about, but whose motives in recommending they were not disposed to call in question) when they were in possession of facts on which to form an opinion of their own.

"Suspicions, when once excited," says Mr. B. "and prejudices once alarmed, and anger when roused, can associate guilt to all the actions of men." Whether the opposers of Mr. Richardson have associated guilt with actions to which it does not really belong, shall be left to the decision of others. Conscious, however, that they were men of like passions with others, and aware that they were liable to be led astray by the infirmities inseparable from human nature, they solicited the advice of a very respectable, independent and impartial council; but Mr. B. did not think proper to suffer this council to avail themselves of such information as was necessary to enable them to form a satisfactory opinion on every part of the subject on which they were called to advise.

The writer, in conclusion, bears honourable testimony in our favour, "that we are supported by popular names," and "that we have the approbation of ancient associations." This indeed, next to the approbation of our own consciences, is our glory and our boast; and we frankly confess we value the approbation of one ancient association, founded on correct and long tried principles, much more highly than that of *the whole host of Illuminati and modern philosophers.*

Having thus noticed what we thought proper in Mr. B's letter, we would observe, that some comments which might have been made on this, have been anticipated in our preceding remarks. Many more might still be made, but we conceive sufficient has been said to give the reader a correct view of the unhappy disputes which have taken place in the North Parish in Hingham, and of some of the principal cha-

acters concerned. We will only add, that, as we regret the occasion which obliged us to do this, so we have avoided touching on any thing which justice to ourselves, our society and our cause did not seem to us imperiously to demand. We now pledge ourselves for the truth of what we have stated as facts. Of the candour of our remarks we leave others to judge, and submit the whole to the discerning and impartial public, before whom we are confident we shall stand not only acquitted, but approved.

BENJ. LINCOLN,
NATHAN RICE,
SAMUEL NORTON,
THOMAS LORING,
ABNER LINCOLN,
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